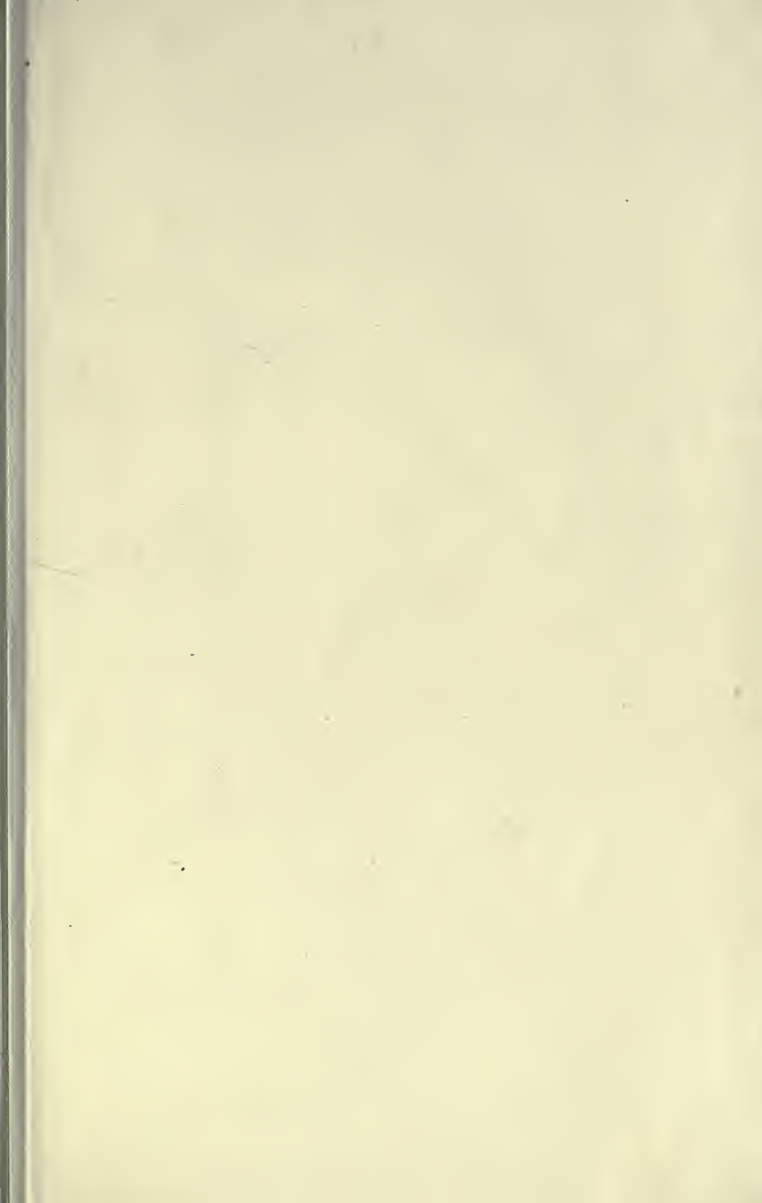


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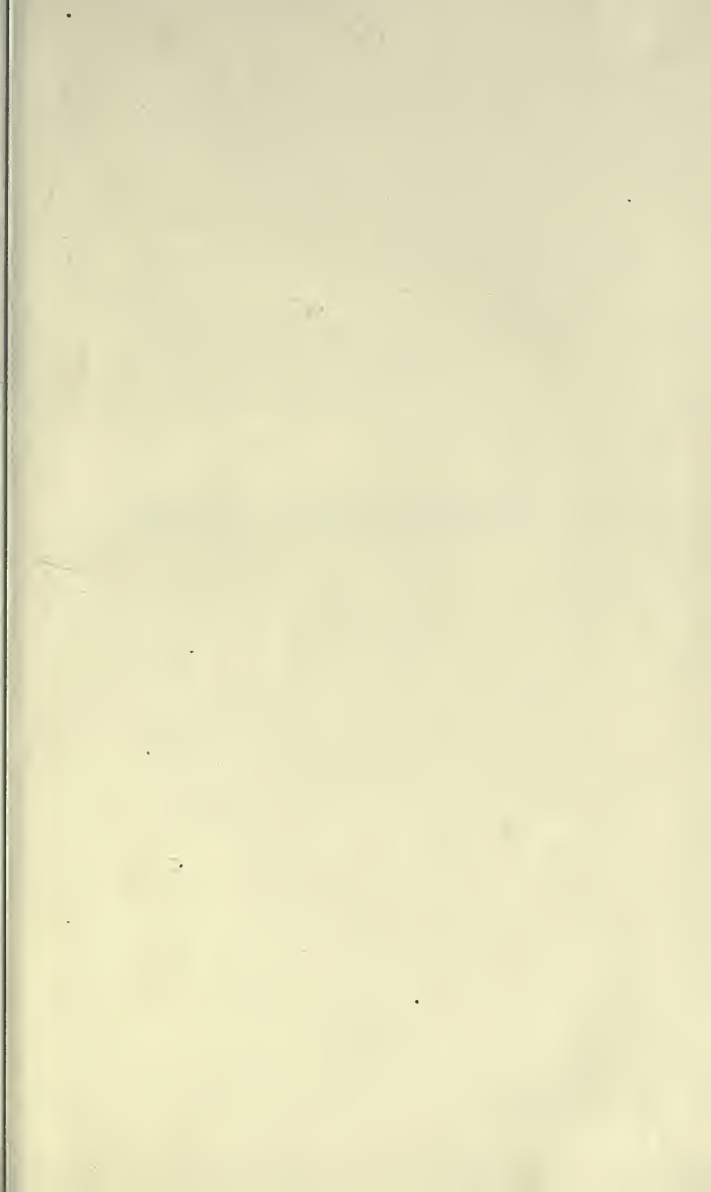
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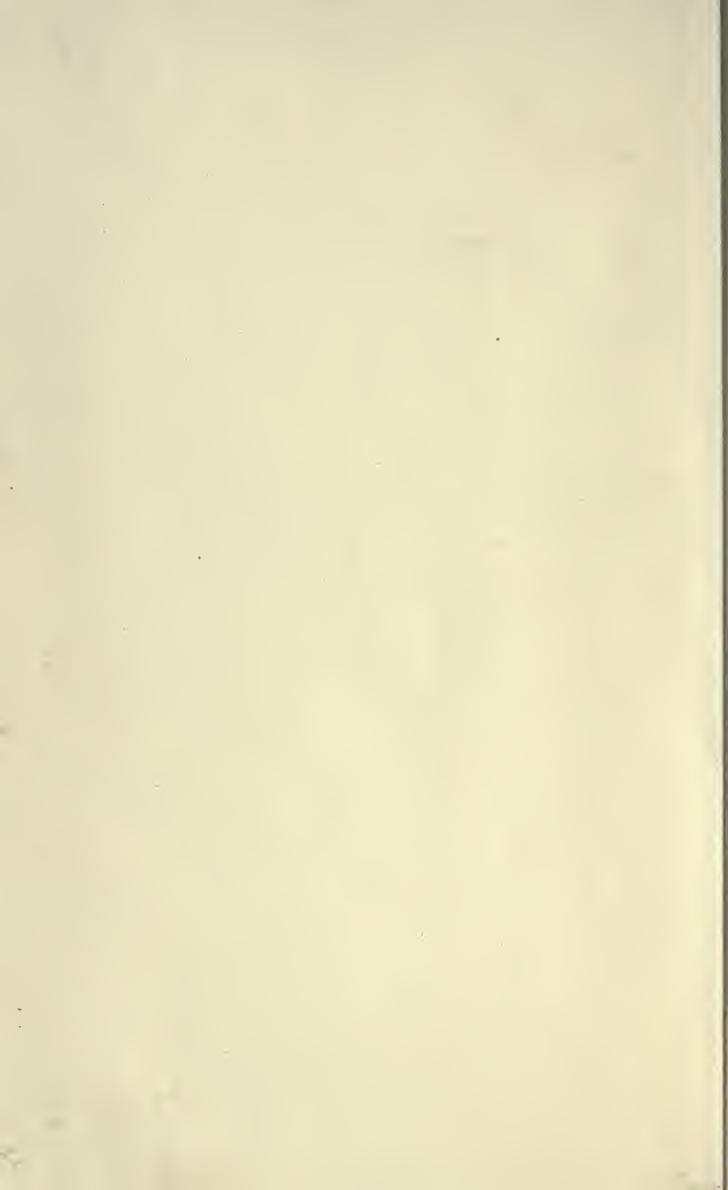






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I

PETER AND ALEXIS

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

TRILOGY OF HISTORICAL ROMANCES

- I. THE DEATH OF THE GODS
- II. THE FORERUNNER; OR, THE ROMANCE OF
LEONARDO DA VINCI
- III. PETER AND ALEXIS

CRITICISM

TOLSTOY AS MAN AND ARTIST, WITH AN ESSAY
ON DOSTOIEVSKI

LONDON: ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE & CO LTD

PETER AND ALEXIS

An Historical Novel

By

DMITRI MEREJKOWSKI

AUTHOR OF "THE DEATH OF THE GODS" (JULIAN THE APOSTATE)
AND "THE FORERUNNER" (THE ROMANCE OF
LEONARDO DA VINCI)

Sole Authorized Translation from the Russian

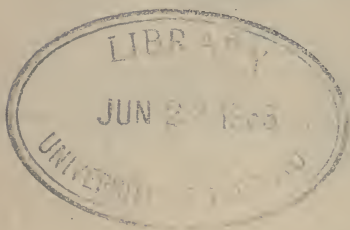
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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS remarkable novel, the first by Merejkowski on a purely Russian theme, completes the already famous historical Trilogy, of which *The Death of the Gods*, and *The Forerunner*, or Romance of Leonardo da Vinci, were the two former instalments. For some account of the author, and of the main idea underlying the Trilogy, the reader is referred to the English preface to *The Death of the Gods*.

These novels, which may be read independently of each other, have been very successfully translated into all the principal European languages; and the exclusively authorized English translations of them, published in England by Messrs. Archibald Constable, and in the United States by Messrs. Putnam, are being again issued in new editions respectively in both countries.

The present translation, although it is feared much like Heine's "stuffed moonbeam," has been made direct from the Russian original, and pains have not been spared to render it exact. Thanks are due to Mr. W. R. Morfill, Reader in Russian to the University of Oxford, for his kind assistance on one or two difficult points.

A word of explanation is due to the English and American public with regard to the purpose of the present work.

No one who knows Merejkowski personally, no one who reads his story with a fair mind, will imagine for a moment that it is written to please or to amuse the "young person." It is intended for men and women. It is a simple and earnest psychological study of the most moving episode in the life of the greatest of the Romanoff princes. It is a sketch, vivid and true, of classes and conditions,—of court and society,—of peasants and wild religious

beliefs—in Russia at the beginning of the eighteenth century. As regards the bulk of her population she has not materially changed.

Russia at that time lay in a position relative to Europe precisely analogous to that occupied by Japan thirty-five years ago. The vaster country, as the reader will see, was beginning, through the person of its sovereign, humbly to learn of the civilised West, just as Japan began to do so also through her sovereign's efforts in 1868.

But in this book a strange additional feature of interest for the present moment is a psychological feature. The character of the Romanoff family is a persistent one; and in the course of this novel, with its single terrific scene, dull indeed will be the reader who does not step by step more clearly discern in the soul of the luckless Alexis the very lineaments and complexion of Nicholas, the now living occupant of the Russian throne. This is the key to the book. Probably before the present year has expired, perhaps even before these words are being read, he will occupy the throne no longer. And the forces that will remove him are, it is believed, essentially the same forces as those which decided the fate of Alexis.

September, 1905.

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Book I

THE VENUS OF PETERSBURG

CHAPTER I

"*ANTICHRIST* is coming. He, the last of devils, has not yet come himself ; but the world is teeming with his progeny. The children are preparing the way for their father. They twist everything to suit the designs of Antichrist. He will appear in his own due time, when everywhere all is prepared and the way smoothed. He is already at the door. Soon will he enter !"

Thus spake an old man of fifty, a clerk, judging by his clothes, to a young man, who, wrapped in a nankeen dressing gown, with slippers on his bare feet, was seated at a table.

"And how do you know all this ?" asked the young man. "Of that day it is written : *Neither the Son, nor the angels know* ; but you seem to know."

He yawned, and then after a moment's silence asked :

"Do you belong to the heretics—the Raskolniks ?"

"No, I am an Orthodox."

"Why did you come to Petersburg ?"

"I have been brought here from Moscow, together with my account books. An informer reported me for taking bribes."

"Did you take them ?"

"I did. I was not compelled to, neither did I do it for the sake of extortion, but in all fairness, and with a clean conscience, being satisfied with whatever was freely given me for the clerk-work I did."

He said it so simply that it was evident he did not consider bribe-taking necessarily a fault.

"The informer could add nothing to the proof of my guilt, which was disclosed by the entries made in certain agents' books, showing that they had for years been wont to give me trifling sums, amounting in all to two hundred and fifteen roubles; and I have nothing wherewith to repay the sum. I am poor, old, sad, wretched, disabled, destitute; and unable any longer to do my work, I beg to be discharged of it. Most merciful Highness! open your bowels of compassion unto me, and protect a defenceless old man; cause me to be exempted from this unjust payment! Have mercy upon me, I beseech you, Tsarevitch Alexis Petrovitch!"

Alexis had met this old man some months ago in Petersburg, at St. Simeon and St. Anne's Church. Noticing him because of his unshaven, grizzled beard—so unusual for clerks—and his zealous reading of the Psalms in the choir, the Tsarevitch had asked him his name, position, and whence he came.

The old man had introduced himself, as a clerk of the Moscow Arsenal, Larion Dokoukin by name. He had come from Moscow and was now staying in the house belonging to the woman who made the consecrated bread at St. Simeon's; he had mentioned his poverty, the informer's disclosure, and also, almost in his first words, had referred to Antichrist. The Tsarevitch had been touched by the pitiable condition of the old man and told him to come to his house, promising to help him with money and advice. Now that he stood before him in his torn coat he looked the very image of a beggar. He was one of those poor ordinary clerks, nicknamed in Russia "inky souls," "pettifoggers." Hard were his wrinkles as though fossilized, hard the cold look in the small dim eyes, hard his neglected grizzled beard, his face colourless and dull as the papers which he had been copying and had pored over may be for thirty years in his office. He had accepted bribes from agents "in all fairness"; he may have even been guilty of roguery, and this was the conclusion he had suddenly arrived at: Antichrist is coming!

"Is he not simply an impostor?" surmised the Tsarevitch, looking steadily at him. There was nothing

deceitful or sly in this face, but rather something artless and helpless, sombre and stubborn, as with people who are possessed by an *idée fixe*.

"There was yet another reason for my coming here," added the old man, and then stopped short, unable to continue; the *idée fixe* was slowly working its way through his hard features. He cast down his eyes, fumbled with one hand in his breast pocket, pulled out some papers, which had apparently slipped into the lining through the pocket-hole, and gave them to the Tsarevitch.

They consisted of two thin, greasy, quarto booklets, filled with the large legible handwriting of a clerk.

Alexis began to read them carelessly, but gradually became more and more absorbed.

At the beginning came passages from the Holy Fathers, the prophets, and the Apocalypse, with reference to Antichrist and the end of the world. Then followed an appeal to the chief clergy of great Russia, and of the world, together with a prayer that they would forgive him, Dokoukin, his impudence and rudeness for thus writing this without their fatherly blessing, prompted as he had been solely by much suffering, sorrow and zeal for the Church, and with a further prayer that they would also intercede on his behalf with the Tsar and entreat him to show mercy unto himself, and vouchsafe him a hearing. Then followed what was evidently Dokoukin's main idea, "God has ordained man to be master of himself (to exercise self-will, to be autonomous,)" and at the end came an accusation against the Tsar Peter:

"Nowadays we are cut off from this divine gift—life absolute and free; as well as deprived of houses, markets, agriculture, handicrafts and all the old established trades and laws, and, what is worse still, of Christian religion. We are hunted from house to house, from place to place, from town to town; we are insulted and outraged. We have changed all our customs, our language and dress; we have shaved our heads and beards, we have basely defiled ourselves; we have lost all that was characteristic both of nature and bearing, and in no wise differ now from the foreigners; we have once and for all mingled with them, got used to their ways, broken our Christian vows, and for-

saken the holy churches. We have turned away from the East, and directed our footsteps toward the West, we have travelled along strange and unknown paths and have perished in the land of oblivion. We have adopted strangers and have showered good gifts upon them, while our own countrymen are left to die of hunger, to be beaten on distraint and ruined absolutely by unbearable taxation. It is inexpedient to give utterance to everything ; more becoming is it to place a bridle on one's tongue But the heart is sore distressed to see the desolation of the New Jerusalem, and the troubled people smitten with insufferable scourges ! ”

“ All this,” ran the conclusion, “ is done unto us for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. O Secret Martyrs ! fear not, neither despair, but rise valiantly and arm yourselves with the cross to repel the power of Antichrist. Suffer for the Lord's cause, bear all patiently for yet a little while ! Christ will not forsake us. Unto Him be praise now and ever more, world without end, Amen.”

“ What was your reason for writing this ? ” asked the Tsarevitch, when he had read through the booklet.

“ A little while ago I dropped a letter like this in the porch of St. Simeon's,” answered Dokoukin, “ but those who found the letter simply burnt it, neither reporting it to the Tsar nor making any inquiries about it. This petition here I think of nailing up somewhere in the Trinity Church, near the Tsar's palace, so that whoever reads it may be informed and may report it to his Majesty. And I wrote this to bring about a reform, so that the Tsar, should he once come to himself again, might amend his ways.”

“ A cheat,” flashed across Alexis' mind, “ and possibly an informer. Why in the devil's name did I thus commit myself ? ”

“ Are you aware, Dokoukin,” said the Tsarevitch, looking straight into his face, “ are you aware of the fact that it is my duty, as citizen and son, to report these, your seditious and rebellious writings, to my father the Sovereign ? And the twentieth article of the military regulations reads : ‘ Whosoever shall use seditious language against his Majesty shall forfeit his life by having his head cut off. ’ ”

"It is for you to decide, Tsarevitch. For myself I am willing to suffer for Christ's sake."

He said it in the same unpretentious manner as when he was speaking about bribes. Alexis eyed him yet more closely. Before him was the same ordinary clerk, the pettifogger, with the same cold look and dull face. Only somewhere deep in his eyes something was again struggling forth.

"Are you in your right senses, old man? Consider what you are about! Once in the torture chamber, there will be an end of joking; you will be hanged by the ribs and smoked to death like Gregory of Talitsa."

Gregory of Talitsa was one of those prophets, preaching the approach of the judgment day, who had declared that Tsar Peter was the Antichrist, and for this reason he had suffered the cruel death of being smoked on a slow fire.

"With God's help I am ready to give up my life," answered the old man. "To-day, to-morrow, we all must die once. It is meet to have done something good with which to come before God, lest death should be our lot there also."

His manner remained as simple as before, yet there was something in the calm face and subdued voice which inspired the conviction that this arsenal clerk, discharged for having yielded to bribery, would really meet death without flinching, like one of those "Secret Martyrs" he mentioned in his petition.

"No," the Tsarevitch promptly decided, "he is neither a cheat nor a spy, but either mad or, in truth, a martyr."

The old man hung his head, and added in a yet lower tone, as if to himself, forgetful of the other's presence: "God has commanded man to be master of himself."

Alexis rose and, without another word, tore a page from the booklet, lit it at a lamp which was glimmering before the images, uncovered the draught hole, opened the stove door, shoved in the papers, and waited; he stirred them from time to time till they were reduced to ashes, then went up to Dokoukin, who all the time stood watching him, laid his hand on his shoulder and said:—

"Listen, old man, I will report you to none. I see you

are an honest man ; I trust you. Tell me, do you wish me well ? ”

Dokoukin did not reply, yet his look made words unnecessary.

“ If you do, then banish all this nonsense from your head ! Never even dare so much as think of writing such seditious letters ; this is not the time for them. If it were known you had been to see me, I too should fare ill. Go, God be with you, and don’t come again. Don’t talk with any one about me. Should you be questioned, keep your own counsel, and leave Petersburg as quickly as possible. Now will you remember what I tell you ? ”

“ What else can one do but obey you ? ” said Dokoukin, “ the Lord knows I am your faithful servant unto death.”

“ Don’t fret about the informer’s report,” continued Alexis, “ I’ll put in a word where it is necessary, rest assured you shall be exempt from it all. Now go—or no, wait, give me your handkerchief.”

Dokoukin handed him a dark blue chequered handkerchief, faded, full of holes, as miserable looking as the owner. Alexis opened a drawer in his small walnut wood desk, which stood next to the table, took from it without counting about twenty roubles in silver and copper—a whole treasure for the destitute Dokoukin—wrapped the money in the handkerchief, and gave it back with a kindly smile.

“ Take this for thy journey. On thy return to Moscow order a mass at the Archangel Cathedral, and have God’s servant Alexis remembered. Only be careful and don’t let it be known who this Alexis is ! ”

The old man took the money, yet neither thanked him nor stirred. He stood as before, with his head hung down. At last he lifted his eyes, and began in a solemn voice a speech which he had probably prepared beforehand :—

“ As of old God quenched Samson’s thirst by means of an ass’s jawbone, so to-day has not the same God used my ignorance as a means to convey something useful and refreshing to you ? ”

But he suddenly broke down, his voice gave way, his solemn speech stopped short, his lips trembled, he staggered and fell at Alexis’ feet.

“ Have mercy, our Father, listen to us, poor, groaning,

and lowliest of slaves ! Work zealously for the Christian faith ; build up, control, give to the Church peace and unity of spirit. Tsarevitch ! Fair child of the Church, our sun and Russia's hope ! the world is waiting to be enlightened by thee. The scattered sons of God rejoice in thee. Who but thou can succour us ? We all are lost without thee, our beloved ! have mercy ! ”

The old man knelt before Alexis, embracing his knees, weeping, and covering his feet with kisses. The Tsarevitch listened, and this desperate prayer seemed to gather into itself and give expression to the wrongs of all those who were perishing, outraged, and goaded to despair, a cry from the whole people for help.

“ Enough, enough, old man,” he said, stooping and trying to lift him, “ Am I then blind and deaf ? Does not my heart ache for you ? The sorrow is common to us. I feel the same as you do. Should God once grant me to rule over this country, I will do all I can to ease the people's lot. Neither will I then forget you ; I need faithful servants. And meanwhile bear patiently, and pray God to speed the fulfilment, for His holy will worketh in all things.”

He helped him up. The old man looked very weak and pitiful ; but his eyes glowed with such joy, as though he already beheld the salvation of Russia. Alexis embraced, and kissed him on his forehead. “ Good-bye, Dokoukin, we shall meet some day, God willing. The Lord be with thee ! ”

* * * * *

When Dokoukin left, the Tsarevitch returned to his leather armchair—which was old and well-worn, with the hair stuffing peering through the holes, yet remarkably soft and comfortable, and there he sank into a kind of doze or torpor.

Alexis was twenty-five years old, tall, slim, narrow across the shoulders and in the chest ; his face, too, was thin and strangely long, as if drawn out and pointed at the chin ; it looked old, sickly, and sallow, like the face of people who suffer from kidney disease ; his mouth was very small, pitiful and childlike ; long tufts of straight black hair surrounded his large open arched brow. Such faces are common among monastic novices, country deacons, and choristers. Yet

when he smiled his eyes would light up with intelligence and kindness ; his face would suddenly become young and handsome and shine as with some soft inner light. At such moments he resembled his grandfather, the gentle Tsar Alexis.

As he was now, wrapped in a dirty dressing gown, worn-out slippers on his bare feet, sleepy, unshaven, his hair unkempt, he little looked like Tsar Peter's son. Last night's drinking bout had given him a severe headache ; the best part of the day had gone while he slept it off ; it was well on towards evening when he got up. His disarranged couch, with its large crumpled feather bed and sheets, could be seen through the open door in the next room.

Upon the writing table there lay scattered before him sundry rusty mathematical instruments, covered with dust ; a broken antique censer filled with frankincense, a tobacco grater, meerschaum pipes, an empty hair-powder box, now used as an ash tray, piles of paper and books, all in a muddle ; notes on Baronius' "Universal Chronicle," in Alexis' own handwriting, were covered up by a heap of packet tobacco ; a half eaten cucumber was lying on the open page of a tattered book, whose title ran : "Geometry or Earth—measurement by root and compass, for the instruction of knowledge-loving painstakers" ; a well picked bone was left on a pewter plate, and close by a sticky liqueur glass with a fly buzzing in it. Innumerable flies were crawling and buzzing in black swarms over the walls, hung with torn, dirty grass-green oilcloth, over the smoked ceiling, and the dim panes of the double windows, which had been left in regardless of the hot June weather.

Flies were buzzing all around him, and drowsy thoughts swarmed like flies in his mind. He remembered the fight which had ended last night's drinking bout ; Jibanda struck Sleepyhead, Sleepyhead Lasher, and then Father Hell, Starling and Moloch had rolled under the table. These were nicknames which Alexis had given to his boon companions, "for his private diversion." Alexis also remembered beating and pulling somebody's hair, but who this somebody was, he could not recall. Last night it had amused him, to-day he felt ashamed and miserable over it.

His head was again beginning to ache. He longed for

another glass to cure this drunken headache ; but he was too lazy to go and get one, too lazy even to call out to his servants. Yet the next moment he would be obliged to dress, pull on his tight-fitting uniform, buckle his sword, put on the heavy wig, which would only intensify his headache, and present himself at the Summer Garden for a masque where all were ordered to appear, under threat of terrible punishment for the defaulter.

He heard the voices of children skipping and playing in the courtyard. A sickly ruffled green-finch twittered plaintively from time to time in his cage over the window. The pendulum of a tall upright English striking clock, an old present from his father, was ticking monotonously. Seemingly interminable, melancholy runs of scales reached his ears from the apartment overhead. It was his wife the Crown Princess Charlotte, who was playing on a tinkling old German spinet. All at once he remembered how last night, when drunk, he had railed about her to Jibanda and Lasher : " I am encumbered with a devil of a wife. Come when I will to her, she is always bad tempered, and will not speak to me. Such a mighty personage ! " " This won't do," he thought now, " I talk too much when I am drunk, and afterwards I am sorry for it." Was it her fault that, when but a child, she was forced to marry him, and by what right did he mock her ? Sick, lonely, abandoned by all, in a foreign land, she was as unhappy as himself. Yet she loved him, perhaps she was the only one who did love him. He remembered their recent quarrel ; how she had called out : " The lowest cobbler in Germany treats his wife better than you do ! " He had angrily shrugged his shoulders : — " Go back to Germany then, God speed you ! " " Yes, I would, if I were not — " She had not continued, but had burst into tears pointing to herself : she was with child. How well he remembered those pale blue eyes, swollen with tears trickling down her cheeks, washing off the powder she, poor girl, had specially put on for him. Her usually plain features had become haggard and plainer yet during pregnancy : a pathetic, helpless face. And yet he himself loved her, or at any rate he pitied her, at times with some strange, hopeless, desperate, poignant, well nigh overwhelming feeling of pity. Why then did he torture her ? Was he

bereft of all sense of sin and shame ? He would have to answer for her before God.

The flies seemed quite to distract him. A hot slanting ray of the red setting sun, coming through the window, just caught his eyes.

At last he altered the position of his arm-chair, turned his back to the window, and fixed his eyes on the stove. It was a huge stove, built of Russian glazed tiles imitated from the Dutch, clamped together at the corners with brass. It was decorated with carved pillars, flowered recesses, and sockets. Various curious animals, birds, human beings, and plants were represented on a white ground in thick red, green, and dark violet colours ; under each design there was an inscription in Slavonic characters. The colours glowed with unusual brightness in the glare of the setting sun, and for the hundredth time Alexis looked at these designs with drowsy curiosity and read over the inscriptions : under a man with a musical instrument the legend : " I make melody ; " under a man sitting in an arm-chair with a book, " Improving the mind ; " under a full blown tulip the words : " My scent is sweet ; " under an old man kneeling before a beauty the words : " No love for an old man ! " under a couple sitting under a tree the words : " Taking good counsel together : " a birch elf, French comedians, a Japanese priest, the goddess Diana and the legendary bird Malkothea.

Meanwhile the flies go on buzzing ; the pendulum ticks ; the green-finch pipes in a melancholy tone ; the sound of scales from above, the voices of children rise from the court below. The sharp red ray of sunlight grows duller and fainter, the coloured figures assume life, the French comedians play leap-frog with the birch elf, and the Japanese priest winks at the bird Malkothea.

Everything begins to lose precision ; his eyelids grow heavy, and but for the large sticky black fly, no longer buzzing in the glass, but in his head, all would be so quiet, so peaceful, in this dark red gloom.

Suddenly a shudder went through him ; he started up. " Have mercy upon us ! " The words seemed to thunder within him with violent force. He cast a look round his untidy room, and at himself, and his cheeks, bathed a mo-

ment since in the red blaze of the setting sun, were now glowing with shame. A goodly Hope of Russia indeed ! Brandy, sleep, indolence, lies, filth, and a ceaseless craven fear of his father.

Was it really too late ? Was this really to be the end ? Could he but shake himself free, and run away ! "Suffer for Christ's sake," again Dokoukin's words came to his mind,—"God willed man to be master of himself." Yes, he would join them ere it is too late. They, the Secret Martyrs, are calling and waiting for him.

He started up as if really intending to act upon his impulse—to do something irrevocable ; as he stood there, indecisive, his heart sank with foreboding.

The slow melodious brass chime of the clock rang out through the stillness. It struck nine. When the last stroke had died away, the door was gently pushed open, and a head peered into the room ; it was his valet, the aged Ivan Afanássieff.

"It is time to be going. Would you not like to get ready ?" He muttered it in his usual grumpy voice, as if he were chiding Alexis.

"No thank you, I am not going," said Alexis.

"As you please. The order was for everyone to be present ; your father will again be wrathful."

"Go, go." Alexis was going to turn him out of the room, when looking at this ruffled, unkempt, unshaven, unwashed, sleepy face, he suddenly remembered, that it was this man he had pulled by the hair on the previous night.

Alexis fixed on him a long perplexed gaze, as if he had only at this moment fully awakened.

From the window the last ray of sunlight had died away ; immediately the room lost all its brightness, and grew dreary ; it seemed as if some monstrous grey cobweb, which up to that moment had been lurking in the dirty ceiling, was now gradually descending, filling the space with a dense net of dinginess.

The head continued to peer through the door, as if it had stuck there, moving neither to nor fro.

"Have you at last decided whether you will dress or not ?" repeated Ivan in a yet gruffer voice.

Alexis waved his hand in utter helplessness.

"I will, it's all the same!" and seeing the head did not disappear, but apparently awaited further orders, he added:

"Just another glass of orange liqueur. My head is splitting from last night's drinking bout——"

The old man said nothing, yet his look plainly intimated, "It is not *your* head which ought to be aching after last night."

Left to himself, the Tsarevitch clasped his fingers, stretched out his arms till all the joints cracked, and yawned. Shame, fear, sorrow, repentance, thirst for immediate heroism, all dissolved in this slow, hopeless yawn, which neither pain nor contortions could repress, which was more awful than any sob or groan.

* * * * *

In an hour's time, washed and shaved, with hardly any trace of drink about him, dressed in a tightly-fitting officer's uniform of the Preobrazhensky Regiment, of green cloth with red facings and golden galoon, he was wending his way to the Summer Palace along the Neva in a six-oared boat.

CHAPTER II

IT was the twenty-sixth of June, 1715; a festival in honour of Venus had been arranged for that day in the Summer Garden. Her statue, newly arrived from Rome, was to be placed in the pavilion overlooking the Neva.

"I will have a braver garden than the French King at Versailles," boasted Peter. When away on campaigns, at sea or in foreign lands, the Tsaritza used to supply him with news about his favourite nursling: "Our garden has come on beautifully, better than last year. The avenue leading from the palace is almost entirely overshadowed with maple and oak trees. Whenever I go out, I am grieved not to have you, my heart's joy, with me. Our garden is gradually becoming green, there is already a strong smell of resin in the air,"—she was referring to the scent of the trees just bursting into leaf.

The Summer Garden, in fact, was laid out on the same plan as the renowned park at Versailles, with smoothly shorn trees, flower beds in geometrical figures, straight canals, square lakes, swans, islets, bowers, ingenious water-sprays, endless avenues, prospects, high leafy hedges, and espaliers which resembled the walls of some grand reception hall. Here people were encouraged to walk about, and when tired to seek rest and seclusion, for which a goodly number of benches, pavilions, labyrinths and green lawns were provided.

Yet, nevertheless, the Tsar's garden was far inferior to the gardens at Versailles.

The pale northern sun drew but puny tulips from the

fat Rotterdam bulbs. Only the humbler boreal flowers grew freely, such as, for instance, Peter's favourite, the scented tansy, double peonies, and melancholy bright dahlias. Young trees, brought here with incredible trouble by sea and by land even a distance of 1,000 miles—from Prussia, Poland, Pomerania, Denmark, and Holland—were also far from flourishing; the foreign soil nourished their roots but scantily. On the other hand, as at Versailles, all along the main alleys marble busts and statues were placed. Roman emperors, Greek philosophers, Olympian gods and goddesses seemed to look at one another in amazement, unable to understand how they got into this wild country of the "Hyperborean Barbarians." These statues, however, were not the antique originals, but feeble imitations by second-rate Italian and German masters. The gods appeared to have only just taken off their wigs and embroidered coats, the goddesses their lace-trappings and robes; they seemed to wonder at their scarcely decent nakedness, and resembled affected cavaliers and dames who had been taught the delicacies of French politeness at the court of Louis XIV. and the Duke of Orleans.

Alexis was walking along one of the side alleys, which led from the large lake in the direction of the Neva. He was accompanied by a funny, hobbling, bow-legged creature, who wore a shabby foreign-cut coat, a huge wig and a flurried confused expression, like some one suddenly aroused from his sleep. He was the head of the Armoury department and of the new Printing Works, the first master-printer in Petersburg—Michael Avrámoff.

The son of a deacon, at the age of seventeen, Avrámoff had been taken straight from the Breviary and Psalms to a trading vessel at Kronslot; the vessel was bound for Amsterdam with a cargo of tar, skins, leather, and a dozen "Russian youths," who had been selected by Peter's command from "sharp youngsters," for instruction abroad. After some study of geometry and more at classic mythology, Avrámoff had received commendations and a diploma from his teachers. Not stupid by nature, he seemed to have been stunned and baffled by a too sudden transition from the Psalms and Breviary to the Fables of Ovid

and Virgil, and never to have recovered. His mind had undergone something like a fit of convulsions to which little children are subject, when suddenly startled from their sleep, and ever since his face had retained that expression of stupefaction.

"Tsarevitch, I confess to you, as before God," spoke Avrámoff in a monotonous whining tone, like the buzzing of a gnat, "my conscience is uneasy, in that being Christians we yet worship idols."

"What idols?" asked the Tsarevitch in amazement.

Avrámoff pointed to the marble statues along both sides of the alley.

"Our fathers and forefathers placed holy icons in their houses and along the roads, but we are ashamed to do likewise, and set up shameless idols instead. When God's images have God's power in them, the devil's images in like manner will surely hold the devil's power. In the Most Foolish Conclave with the Kniaz-pope we have been serving the drunken god Bacchus; and now, to-day, we are preparing to worship that dissolute and obscene goddess Venus. These ceremonies are termed masquerades and are not accounted to us for sin; for, they say, these gods have never existed, and their lifeless statues are placed in house and garden solely for the sake of ornament. But that is where folk fatally err; because these ancient gods do really and verily exist."

"You believe in their existence?" Alexis' surprise increased.

"Your royal Highness, according to the witness of holy men, I believe that the gods are evil spirits, who, being cast out of their temples in the name of the Crucified, sought refuge in dark and desert places, there pretending to be dead and non-existent till their hour should come. But when ancient Christianity grew feeble and a new infamy had sprung up, then these gods began to regain life, and leave their hiding places; just as various worthless creeping things, scarabees and such like poisonous vermin, emerging from their eggs sting people, so the evil spirits emerging from their larvae, these ancient idols, sting and ruin Christian souls. Do you remember Father Isaac's vision, recorded in the Holy Fathers? How beautiful young men

and maidens with faces bright as the sun, catching hold of the saint's hands, whirled him away in a mad dance to the strains of sweet music, and how when they had tired and dishonoured him they left him almost dead, and disappeared? Then the Holy Father knew that he had been visited by the ancient Greek and Roman gods, Jove, Mercury, Apollo, Venus and Bacchus. Now the evil ones appear unto us sinners to-day, but in disguise, so to speak. And we welcome them, and mingling with them in obscene masquerades, we prance and dance, till in the end, we shall all rush headlong into some deep Tartarus, or, like a herd of swine, into the sea; ignorant fools, not to realize that these beautiful, new, radiant, white devils are far more dangerous than the most churlish and blackest Ethiopian monstrosities!"

It was almost dark in the garden, though it was but the middle of June. Low, black, oppressive storm-clouds crept over the sky. Neither the fireworks nor the festival had as yet been started. The air was as still as in a room. Distant heat lightnings lit up the horizon, and each flash revealed marble statues of almost painfully dazzling whiteness among the green espaliers on both sides of the alley—it seemed as though white phantoms were flitting along the glades.

After all Avrámoff had been telling him the Tsarevitch looked at them with a new feeling. "Really," he thought, "they *are* just like white devils."

Voices became audible. By the sound of one of them, not loud but slightly husky, and also by the red glowing spot, which to all appearance came from the Dutch clay pipe, and disclosed the gigantic stature of the smoker, Alexis recognised his father. He swiftly turned the corner of the alley into a side path leading to a maze of lilac and box shrubs. "Like a hare," he angrily termed his action, which though almost instinctive was nevertheless cowardice.

"What in the devil, Avrámoff, are you always talking about?" he continued, feigning annoyance in order to cover his shame. "Excess of reading seems to have muddled your brain."

"I speak the pure truth, your royal Highness," retorted Avrámoff, not in the least hurt, "I have myself experi-

enced the power of those evil spirits ; it was Satan who enticed me when I asked your father, the Tsar, to let me print Ovid and Virgil. I have already issued one book with drawings of the gods and their mad doings, and ever since I seem to have been beside myself, and subject to insatiable lechery. The Lord has forsaken me, and all sorts of strange gods, especially Bacchus and Venus, have begun to haunt my dreams."

"In what guise?" asked Alexis, his curiosity now aroused.

"Bacchus appeared to me in the shape of Martin Luther the heretic, just as you see him in paintings, a red-faced German with a belly as round as a beer barrel. Then Venus took the form of a girl whom I had known during my stay in Amsterdam: a nude body, white as foam, scarlet lips and impudent eyes. And when I awoke in the bath-house, for this devil's work happened there, the sly witch had changed to the priest's serf girl, Akoulina, who reviling me for hindering her having a bath, impudently struck me across the face with a bunch of wet birch twigs, and jumping into a snow drift in the yard—it happened in winter—she melted away in thin air."

"But this might very possibly have really been Akoulina," laughed the Tsarevitch.

Avramoff was going to retort but stopped short. Again voices became audible. Again a blood-red spot glimmered in the darkness. The narrow path of the dark maze had again brought father and son together in a place too narrow to avoid one another. Again the desperate thought flashed across Alexis' mind to hide himself somewhere, to slip through, or again dart as a hare into the low wood. But it was too late; Peter had already caught sight of him from a distance, and called out:

"Zoon!"

The Dutch "Zoon" signifies son; he called him thus only in rare moments of graciousness. Alexis was all the more surprised, as of late his father had quite given up talking to him either in Dutch or Russian.

He advanced towards his father, took his hat off, made a low bow, and kissed first the lappet of his coat, then the hard horny hand. Peter was attired in a well worn com-

mander's uniform of the Preobrazhensky Regiment. It was of dark green cloth with red facings and brass buttons.

"Thank you, Aliósha," said Peter, and Alexis' heart thrilled at this long unheard "Aliósha." "Thank you for the present you sent me. It came just in the nick of time. My own supply of oak, which was being floated down on a raft from Kazan, perished in a storm on the Ládoga. But for your present, we should scarcely have finished our new frigate before the autumn; the wood was of the best and strongest, like yours—true iron. It is long since I have seen such exceptionally good oak!"

The Tsarevitch knew that nothing pleased his father more than good timber for ship-building. On his own estate in the Porietzky district of the Novgorod government, Alexis had for some time secretly reserved a fine plantation of oak for the day when he should be in special need of his father's favour. When he learnt that they would soon be wanting oak in the dockyard, Alexis had the timber felled and floated on a raft down the Neva just in time to supply his father. It was one of those timid, awkward services, which he had rendered frequently at one time, but of late more and more rarely. However, he did not deceive himself; he knew it would soon be forgotten, like all his previous services, while increased severity would follow this momentary tenderness.

Nevertheless a bashful joy flushed his face; his heart throbbed with mad hope. He muttered something in a low, halting tone, about "always glad to give my father pleasure," and stooped again to kiss his hand. But Peter raised his head with both his hands. For one instant Alexis saw the familiar face, so terrible yet so dear to him, with its full round cheeks, the curly moustache, and the charming smile which flitted across the curved, almost femininely tender lips, he saw the large, dark, lucid eyes, which so fascinated him that he used to dream about them, as a love-sick youth would dream about the eyes of a beautiful woman. He recognized the odour familiar from his childhood: a mixture of strong tobacco, brandy, sweat, and something else, not disagreeable, a smell of soldiers' barracks, which usually filled his father's working room, "the office." He felt the touch, familiar also to him from

his earliest years, of the hard, slightly bristly chin with the dimple in the centre, which seemed strangely out of place on this formidable face. He remembered, or was it only a dream, kissing this odd dimple, saying with delight: "It is just like Granny's," when as a child his father used to take him on his knees.

Peter, kissing his son on the forehead, said in his broken Dutch speech:

"Good beware ú!

This slightly stiff Dutch "you" in place of "thou" sounded to Alexis charmingly amiable.

He seemed to have felt and seen all this in a flash of lightning. The lightning faded away and all disappeared. Peter had already passed a good way on, his head thrown back as was his wont, slightly twitching his shoulder, waving his right hand in a soldierly manner, walking at his usual rapid pace, which was so quick that those who accompanied him were obliged to keep up by running.

Alexis went in the opposite direction following the same narrow path of the dark maze. Avramoff kept close behind; he again began talking, but now about the Archimandrite of the Alexander Monastery, the Tsar's chaplain Theodosius Janovsky, whom Peter had appointed "Administrator of Religious Affairs," and had thus raised above the first prelate, the aged occupant of the Patriarchal throne, —Stephen Javorsky. Theodosius was suspected of leanings towards Lutheranism, of secretly plotting to abolish the worship of icons, relics, the keeping of fasts, monasteries, the Patriarchate and other ancient statutes and customs of the Orthodox Church. Others surmised that Theodosius was dreaming of himself becoming Patriarch.

"This Theodosius is a veritable atheist and a most insolent pagan," Avramoff continued. "He has wormed his way into the hard-worked monarch's holy confidence and enthralled him. He boldly destroys Christian laws and traditions, and introduces an ambitious, luxurious, epicurean, almost swinish way of living. He, this mad heresiarch, tore the crown off the wonder-working Kazan icon of the Virgin; 'Sexton, a knife!' he cried, cut the wire, tore off the embossed golden ornament, and put the spoil in his pocket, barefacedly, before the eyes

of all ; and those who saw it were amazed and bewailed such impudence. Meanwhile he, the unclean vessel, the obscene one, turned away from God, made a compact with Satan, and, mad goat that he is, even wanted to spit and trample on the Life-giving Cross, the Saviour's image ! ”

The Tsarevitch gave no heed to Avrámov's prattle. He was musing over and trying by arguments to choke this unreasonable, and as it now seemed, childish joy. What was he expecting ? What was he hoping for ? A reconciliation with his father ? Was it possible ? Did he himself really wish for one ? Had not something taken place, which could never be forgotten or forgiven ? He remembered hiding himself in cowardly fear a moment ago ; he remembered Dokoukin and his “ denunciatory petition against Peter,” and many other far more terrible, unanswerable denunciations. It was not for his own sake merely that he had rebelled against his father. And yet, a few kind words, one smile, had sufficed to melt and soften his heart. He is again willing to fall at his father's feet, forget and forgive everything and himself implore for pardon, as if he alone were the guilty one. He is ready, for another such caress, another such smile, to surrender his soul to him anew. “ Is it possible,” he thought almost terrified, “ that I love him so much ? ” Avrámov continued talking like a gnat humming in one's ear. The Tsarevitch caught his last words : “ When St. Mitrofan of Vorónesh saw Bacchus, Venus and other gods standing on the roof of the Tsar's palace, he said : ‘ I cannot enter the house until the Tsar orders these idols, which mislead the people, to be taken down. ’ And the Tsar, honouring the holy man, had them all removed. That's how it was in the past ; but to-day, who dares speak the truth to the Tsar ? Not Theodosius the unclean one, who turns icons into idols. Woe unto us ! It has come to such a pass that, this very day, at this very hour, the Virgin's holy picture will be replaced by a devilish, mischievous image of Venus ! And the monarch your father——”

“ Leave me alone, you fool,” the Tsarevitch exclaimed wrathfully. “ All of you leave me alone ! What are you always at me for ? Damnation ! ” and he used some ribald expressions. “ What have I to do with you ? I neither

know nor desire to know anything. Go and complain to my father : he will see to your rights—”

They were approaching the Skipper's square near the fountain in the middle alley. A crowd had gathered there. They soon attracted attention and many an ear tried to catch their conversation. Avrámoff had paled, he seemed to have shrunk and grown shorter, and eyed Alexis with a furtive look, the look of a child frightened in his sleep, who at any moment might be taken by a fit of convulsions. Alexis felt sorry for him.

“Don't fear, Avrámoff !” he said with a kind, bright smile, which recalled not his father's, but the smile of his grandfather Alexis. “Never fear—I won't denounce you, I know you love me—and my father. Only don't talk such a lot of trash again !” And with a sudden shadow over-casting his countenance, he added in a lower tone : “Even if you should be right, what is the good of it ; who wants truth nowadays ? The lash cannot vie with the axe ; nobody will listen to you, nor to me.”

Between the trees flashed the first lights of the illuminations : many-coloured lanterns, firepots, pyramids of tallow candles placed in the windows and between the carved pillars of the open roofed gallery overlooking the Neva.

Everything had been very ingeniously and plentifully decorated. The gallery consisted of three long narrow pavilions, in the centre of which, under a glass dome, specially constructed by the French architect Leblond, a place of honour had been prepared—a marble pedestal for the Venus of Petersburg.

CHAPTER III

I HAVE purchased a Venus," wrote Beklemísheff to Peter from Italy. "She is highly prized in Rome. The statue differs in no wise from the celebrated Florentine Venus, and is even in better preservation. She was found by some workmen, who discovered her when digging the foundation for a new house; she had been over two thousand years in the ground. She has for a long time stood in the Papal Garden. I have had to conceal her for fear of eager purchasers. I am as yet uncertain whether they will let her go. However, she already belongs to your Majesty."

Peter entered into communication with Clement XI. through his plenipotentiary Savva Ragousínsky and the Cardinal Ottobani, seeking permission to remove the statue to Russia. For a long time the Pope would not agree to this. The Tsar was even ready to carry the Venus off by stealth. At last, after many diplomatic negotiations and wirepullings, the permission was obtained.

"Captain," wrote Peter to Jagoushinski, "the superb statue of Venus must be taken from Leghorn to Innsbruck by land, and thence by water along the Danube to Vienna, under the care of a special guard. And have her addressed to yourself in Vienna. As the statue is of repute there also, it would be advisable to have a carriage stand made with springs on which she may be conveyed to Cracow, and thus avoid all risk of damage, from Cracow she might be sent on by water."

Along seas and rivers, over hills and dales, through towns and deserts, and finally across the miserable settlements, dark forests and bogs of Russia, everywhere carefully

watched, by Peter's will, now rocked on the sea waves, now on carriage-springs in her dark box, as in a cradle or coffin, the goddess journeyed from the Eternal City to the newly-born town of Petersburg.

When she had safely arrived, the Tsar, much as he would have liked a look at the statue, which he had been expecting for so long, and about which he had heard so much, nevertheless overcame his impatience and resolved not to open the box until the first solemn appearance of Venus at the festival in the Summer Garden. Small boats, wherries, canoes, punts, and other new-fashioned river-raft came to the wooden steps which led straight down to the water, and moored at the iron rings of the poles which had been driven in close to the shore. The newly arrived guests came up the steps to the Central Pavilion; here, in the flare of numerous lights, an ever-increasing crowd, sumptuously arrayed, was moving to and fro. The men wore coloured velvet and silk coats, three-cornered hats, swords, stockings and buckled shoes with high heels; on their heads towered large wigs, arranged in magnificent but unnatural curls—black, fair, and occasionally powdered. The ladies wore large, wide-hooped skirts—*robes rondes*—after the latest Versailles fashion, with long trains, beauty spots and rouge on their faces, lace, feathers, and pearls in their hair. But in this resplendent throng there could be also seen military uniforms of plain coarse cloth, even the short jackets of sailors and skippers, and the tarry boats and leather caps of Dutch mariners.

The crowd separated to allow a strange procession to pass. Strong Royal Grenadiers were bending under the weight of a long, narrow packing-case, very much like a coffin, which they bore on their shoulders. Judged by the size of the coffin, the body was of superhuman height. They placed the case on the ground.

The Tsar without any help proceeded to open it, handling the joiners' tools with great rapidity and skill. He was in a hurry, and pulled at the nails with such impatience that he severely scratched one hand. The people thronged round on tiptoe, trying to catch a glimpse over one another's shoulders.

The Privy Councillor, Peter Tolstoi, who had lived for

many years in Italy, a learned man and a poet—he was the first to translate Ovid's *Metamorphoses* into Russian—was describing to the ladies around him, the ancient ruins of the Venus temple.

“On my way to Castello-di-Baia, near Naples (the town had fallen into ruins and its site was overgrown with wood) I saw a shrine dedicated to the goddess Venus. The temple was built in first-rate style, with tall pillars; the arches were decorated with representations of the pagan gods. I also saw there other shrines dedicated to Diana, Mercury, and Bacchus. The cursed tormentor Nero had sacrificed to them in those places, and he is now atoning in hell for his inordinate devotions.”

Peter Tolstoi opened his mother-of-pearl snuff-box—on its lid was represented three lambs, and a shepherd loosening the girdle of a sleeping shepherdess—offered the snuff-box to the pretty Princess Tsherkásky, took a pinch himself, and added with a languid sigh :

“During my stay in Naples (I remember it so well !), I was inamorato with a certain cittadina Francesca, celebrated for her beauty. She cost me over 4,000 roubles; and to this day I cannot free my heart from that tender recollection.”

He spoke Italian so well that he liked interspersing his native speech with Italian words: “inamorato” for in love; “cittadina” for citizen's wife, and so on.

Tolstoi was seventy, yet did not look more than fifty, so strong, alert and fresh was he. The Tsar had often expressed the opinion that Tolstoi's politeness towards ladies “could outdo that of any younger devotee of Venus.” A feline suppleness of gait, a low velvety voice, velvety amiable smile, velvety eyebrows, amazingly thick, black and possibly painted: “He is all velvet, yet not without spikes,” people used to say of him. Even Peter himself, as a rule so careless with regard to his “eaglets,” thought it wise “to keep a stone close at hand when dealing with Tolstoi.” There was many a dark, wicked, and even bloody stain on the conscience of this polite worthy, but he knew the secret of effacing all traces of his misdoings.

The last nails gave way, the wood cracked, the lid was lifted, and the case opened. At first something of a greyish

yellow tint struck the eyes, something which suggested the dust of putrefied bones. These were pine shavings, chips, felt, and combings of wool which had been put there for soft packing. Peter with both hands was routing among them, and when at last he came to the marble body, he joyfully exclaimed :

“ Here she is ! ”

The lead was already being melted for the soldering of the iron tie-rods which were to fix the foot of the statue to the pedestal. The architect Leblond busied himself in getting ready a kind of hoist with steps, ropes, and pulleys. But the statue had first to be raised by hand out of the case.

The servants were assisting Peter. When one of them clasped “ the naked wench ” in coarse joke, the Tsar rewarded him with such a ringing buffet on the ears, that every one present at once felt a certain respect for the goddess.

Flakes of wool were falling off the smooth marble, like grey clods of earth, while again, just as two hundred years ago in Florence, the risen goddess was emerging from her tomb.

The ropes tightened, the pulleys squeaked, she rose higher and higher. Peter stood on a ladder, and fixing the statue to the pedestal, he held her with both arms, as in an embrace.

“ Venus in the embrace of Mars ! ” Leblond, the emotional lover of classics, could not help ejaculating.

“ How beautiful they both are ! ” exclaimed a young maid of honour belonging to the Crown Princess Charlotte’s household. “ Were I the Tsaritzza, I should be jealous.”

Peter was almost as tall as the statue, and his human face remained noble in the presence of this divine one : the man was worthy of the goddess.

A last tremor, a last vibration, and she stood immovably upright and firm on the pedestal.

It was the work of Praxiteles : Aphrodite Anadyomene, the Foam-born, and Urania the Heavenly, the ancient Phœnician Astarte, the Babylonian Mellita, the Mother of Life, the great foster mother, she who had scattered the seed of stars over the blue vault, and shed the Milky-way from her breast.

She was the same now, as on the hillside in Florence where Leonardo da Vinci's pupil had looked at her with superstitious fear ; or, yet earlier, when in the depths of Cappadocia, in the forsaken temple near the old castle of Macellum, her last true worshipper had prayed to her, that pale boy in monk's attire, the future Emperor Julian the Apostate. She had remained the same innocent yet voluptuous goddess, naked and not ashamed. From that very day when she rose from her millennial tomb far away in Florence, she had progressed further and further, from age to age, from people to people, halting nowhere, till in her victorious march she had at last reached the limits of the earth, the Hyperborean Scythia, beyond which there remains nought but chaos and darkness. And having fixed herself on the pedestal she for the first time glanced with a look of surprised curiosity around this strange new land, these flat moss-covered bogs, this curious town, so like the settlements of nomads ; at this sky, which was the same day and night, these black, drowsy, terrible waves so like the waves of the Styx. This land resembled but little her radiant Olympian home ; it seemed as hopeless as the land of Oblivion, the dark Hades. Yet the goddess smiled as the sun would have smiled had he penetrated into Hades.

Peter Tolstoi, yielding to the entreaties of the ladies, declaimed some verses dedicated to Cupid, taken from Anacreon's ancient hymn to Eros.

Cupid once upon a bed
Of roses laid his weary head ;
Luckless archer, not to see
Within the leaves a slumbering bee !
The bee awak'd—with anger wild
The bee awak'd, and stung the child.
Loud and piteous are his cries ;
To Venus quick he runs, he flies !
“Oh, mother !—I am wounded though—
I die with pain—in sooth I do
Stung by some little angry thing,
Some serpent on a tiny wing—
A bee it was—for once I know
I heard a rustic call it so.”
Thus he spoke, and she the while
Heard him with a soothing smile ;

Then said, " My infant, if so much
Thou feel the little wild bee's touch,
How must the heart, ah Cupid ! be,
The hapless heart that's stung by thee ! "

The ladies, who had never heard any poetry except sacred chants and psalms, were charmed.

It came very appropriately, for the next moment Peter himself, as the signal to begin the fireworks, lit and started a flying machine in the shape of Cupid bearing a burning torch. Along an invisible wire Cupid glided down from the gallery to a raft on the Neva, where screens had been erected for " fire diversions " in wicker work designs, and with his torch he set the first allegory on fire—two flaring red hearts on an altar of dazzling light. On one of them was traced in green light a Latin P, on the other a C—Petrus, Caterina. The two hearts merged into one, the inscription appeared : "Out of two I create one." Venus and Cupid blessed the wedlock of Peter and Catherine.

Another configuration appeared, a transparent luminous picture with two designs ; on the one side the god Neptune looking towards Cronstadt, the newly erected fortress in the sea, with the inscription "Videt et stupescit—He sees and is amazed." On the other—Petersburg, the new town amidst marshes and woods, with the inscription "Urbs ubi sylva fuit."

Peter, a great lover of fireworks, managing everything himself, explained the allegories to the audience.

With peeling hiss, in sheaves of fire, numerous rockets soared into the heavens, and there, in the vaulted darkness, dissolved into a rain of slowly dropping and fading red, blue, green and violet stars. The Neva reflected and multiplied them in her black mirror. Fiery wheels were set turning ; fiery jets sprang forth ; serpents began to hiss and twirl ; water and air balls, bursting like bombs, crashed with a deafening noise. A fiery hall appeared with blazing pillars, flaming arches and staircases, and in its centre, dazzling as the sun, shone forth the last tableau : a sculptor—was it the Titan Prometheus ?—standing before an unfinished statue, which he is hewing with chisel and hammer out of a block of marble. Above on a pediment was the All-seeing Eye in a glory, with the inscription,

"Deo adjuvante." The stone block represented ancient Russia. The statue, although unfinished, already bore the semblance of the goddess Venus—she was the new Russia. The sculptor was, in fact, Peter himself. This tableau did not quite succeed: the statue burnt down too quickly and crumbled at the sculptor's feet. He seemed to beat the air; then the hammer too crumbled away, and the hand remained still. The All-seeing Eye grew dim; it leered suspiciously and gave an ominous wink.

No one, however, paid any attention to this; all were occupied by a new spectacle. In clouds of smoke, illumined by a rainbow of Bengal lights, there appeared a huge monster, neither horse nor dragon; with pointed wings and fins, and its tail covered with scales, it came swimming along the Neva from the fortress towards the Summer Garden, towed by a flotilla of rowing boats. In a gigantic shell on the monster's back, sat Neptune, with a long white beard and a harpoon at his feet—sirens and tritons blowing trumpets: "The tritons of the Northern Neptune sound the fame of Russia's Tsar wherever they go," explained one of the onlookers, the chaplain of the fleet, Gabriel Boushínsky. The monster was dragging after it six pair of empty barrels tightly bunged, with the cardinals of the "most Foolish Conclave" sitting astride, one on each barrel, securely strapped so as to prevent their falling into the water; they swam in this procession, pair after pair, loudly blowing their cow horns. After this followed a raft made up entirely of such barrels; it carried a huge tub filled with beer on which the Kniaz-Pope, prelate of Bacchus, floated in a wooden ladle as in a boat; Bacchus himself sat on the edge of the tub. Accompanied by strains of solemn music, this huge water machine slowly approached the Summer Garden, stopped at the Central Pavilion, where the gods landed.

Neptune turned out to be the Tsar's court jester, the old boyar Tourgenev; the sirens, with their long fish-tails dragging after them, like long trains, almost concealing their feet, were serf girls; the tritons, the stable-men of the Admiral Apraksin; the Satyr or Pan accompanying Bacchus was the French dancing master of Prince Ménshikoff;

the adroit Frenchman executed such gambols, that one could believe he had goat's legs like a real faun. In Bacchus, wearing a tiger's skin and a wreath of artificial grapes, with a sausage in one hand and a brandy bottle in the other, they recognised Konon Kárpoff, the leader of the court choristers; he was exceptionally fat and had a ruddy face; to make him appear more real, he had for three whole days been pitilessly filled with brandy, so that, according to his companions, "he had grown like a ripe cranberry," and thus become a veritable Bacchus.

The gods surrounded the statue of Venus. Bacchus, reverently supported by the cardinals and the mock-Pope, fell on his knees before the statue, bowed before her very low, and proclaimed in a thunderous bass voice, worthy of a cathedral precentor: "Most honourable mother Venus, thy humble servant Bacchus, born of Semele, the creator of wine and joy, petitions thee against thy son Eros. Do not allow him, that mad Eros, to hurt us thy people, to ruin our souls, to wound our hearts; may it please thee, Gracious Queen, to be merciful unto us." The cardinals responded with "Amen." Drunk as he was, by force of habit Karpoff was just going to start a church hymn in response, but was checked in time.

Then the Kniaz-Pope, the Tsar's aged tutor, a boyar and table-companion in Tsar Alexis' time, Nikita Zótoff, in a burlesque mantle of red velvet trimmed with ermine, on his head a threefold tiara crowned with the indecent figure of a naked Eros, placed before the statue, on a brazier made of kitchen turnspits, a round brass pan, such as was commonly used for preparing hot punch. Pouring some brandy into it, he lit it. On long poles, bending with the weight, the Tsar's grenadiers brought in a tub of peppered brandy. Besides the clergy, who were present at this festival, as at all similar burlesques, all the guests, both cavaliers and dames and even young girls, were obliged to approach the tub one by one; they had to accept a large wooden spoonful of brandy, were expected to all but empty it, and pour the few remaining drops on the altar fire. Then the cavaliers kissed Venus; the older ones her foot, the younger ones her hand, while the ladies greeted her with ceremonious courtesy. The ceremonies, every detail of which had been

thought out and arranged for by the Tsar, had to be punctiliously gone through under pain of severe punishment, even lashing. The old Tsaritsa Proscovy, Peter's sister-in-law, his brother John's widow, also drank brandy from the tub and curtsied before Venus. She, as a rule, tried to please Peter and yielded to all his new-fangled ideas; it was of no use trying to sail against the wind. Yet when the dignified old dame, dressed in her dark widow's jerkin—Peter allowed her to wear the old style of dress—made the curtesy after the foreign manner before “the shameless naked wench,” she felt very uneasy at heart.

“I would rather be dead than see all this!” thought she. The Tsarevitch also humbly kissed the hand of Venus. Avrámoff tried to hide himself, but he was soon found out and brought back by force; although he quaked, and paled, and shuddered, and sweated, and almost swooned, when, kissing Satan's image, he felt his lips touch the cold marble, yet he accurately performed the ceremony, watched by the keen eye of the Tsar whom he feared even more than the “white devils.”

The goddess seemed to look down upon these desecrations of the gods, this play of the barbarians, without the least wrath. They adored her involuntarily, even in this scoffing; the burlesque tripod became a real altar on which in the flickering bluish flame, thin as the serpent's sting, burnt the soul of Dionysus, her brother god. And illumined by this flame the goddess smiled her subtle smile.

The banquet began. At the top end of the table, under a canopy made of hop foliage and whortleberries, which grew on the hillocks of the native marshes and took the place of the classic myrtle, sat Bacchus astride a barrel from which the Kniaz-Pope filled the glasses with wine.

Tolstoi, addressing himself to Bacchus, declaimed another poem by Anacreon.

When Bacchus, Jove's immortal boy,
The rosy harbinger of joy,
Who, with the sunshine of the bowl,
Thaws the winter of our soul;
When to my inmost core he glides,
And bathes it with his ruby tides,
A flow of joy, a lively heat,
Fires my brain, and wings my feet!

'Tis surely something sweet, I think,
Nay, something heavenly sweet, to drink !
Sing, sing of love, let music's breath
Softly beguile our rapturous death,
While, my young Venus, thou and I
To the voluptuous cadence die !
Then waking from our languid trance,
Again we'll sport, again we'll dance.

"It's plain from the verses," remarked Peter, "that Anacreon was a lordly drunkard and took life mighty easily."

After the customary toasts for the welfare of the fleet, the Tsar and the Tsaritsa, the Archimandrite Theodosius Janovski stood up with solemn air, glass in hand. Notwithstanding the Polish expression of self-esteem on his face—he belonged to the minor Polish nobility—notwithstanding the blue decoration ribbon, and the diamond panagia with the Emperor's likeness on one side and the crucifix on the other, with the diamonds more in number and larger on the former than the latter, notwithstanding all this, Theodosius, to quote Avramoff's account, "had the appearance of some monstrosity," of a starveling or an abortion. He was small, thin and angular; in his tall mitre with its long folds of black crêpe, his very wide pall with wide open sleeves, he greatly resembled a bat. Yet when he joked and especially when he scoffed at sacred things, which usually happened when he was drunk, his sly eyes would sparkle with such wit, such impudent mirth, that the miserable face of the batlike abortion became almost attractive.

"This will not be a flattering oration," said Theodosius, turning to the Tsar, "but I speak the truth from my heart: by your Majesty's actions we have been led from the darkness of ignorance into the lighted theatre of fame, from death into life, and have even joined the throng of civilised nations. Monarch! you have renewed and revived everything, and more yet, given new life to your subjects. What was Russia in olden times? What is she to-day? Let us consider the houses: old rough huts have been replaced by bright palaces; withered twigs by blooming gardens. Let us consider the fortifications: here have we things which prior to this we have not even beheld on charts!"

He went on talking for a long time "about laws, free learning, arts," the fleet, these armed arks, the reformation and the new birth of the Church.

"And thou," he exclaimed in conclusion, brandishing his arms in the heat of rhetoric, so that the wide sleeves, like black wings, made him still more like a bat, "And thou, City of Peter ! young in thy supremacy ! How great is the renown of thy founder ! In a place where nobody even as much as dreamt of human habitation, in a short time a city has been erected worthy to hold the monarch's throne. 'Urbs ubi sylva fuit.' A city in place of a wood. And who will not praise the position of this city ? The district not only excels in beauty the rest of Russia, but even in other countries the like cannot be found ! On a cheerful site art thou erected ! Verily a metamorphosis, a change in Russia hast thou accomplished, O Majesty !"

Alexis listened, and looked at Theodosius attentively. When the later mentioned the "cheerful site" their eyes met for an instant, and the Tsarevitch seemed to discern a spark of mockery in the orator's eyes. He remembered how Theodosius had often in his hearing, during his father's absence, reviled this "cheerful site" and termed it a "devil's bog," "a devil's haunt ;" for some time already it seemed to the Tsarevitch that Theodosius was laughing at his father, almost in his very face, only disguised so cleverly and adroitly that no one save he, Alexis, noticed it ; and every time on a similar occasion, Theodosius would exchange quick cunning looks with him, as if he saw in him an accomplice.

Peter, according to his custom, replied simply and concisely to the ceremonious oration :

"I am eager that the people should know how the Lord hath helped us hitherto. Yet we must not slacken our efforts ; but taking up whatever burden God lays before us, work for the good and advantage of the community."

And returning to ordinary conversation he gave in Dutch (so that the foreigners present could follow him) an exposition of the thought he had lately heard from the philosopher Leibnitz, and which had greatly struck him, "the rotation of sciences : " all science and art were born in the East and in Greece, thence they travelled to Italy,

France, Germany, and lastly through Poland they came into Russia. "Now our turn has come; from us they will again return to Greece and to the East, their birthplace, completing a perfect circle in their wanderings. This Venus," concluded Peter, lapsing into Russian, with a naïve declamatory eloquence, natural to him, "this Venus has come to us from there, from Greece. Our soil has been ploughed with the plough of Mars, and the seed has been scattered. We now await a good return which Thou, O Lord, vouchsafe unto us! May our harvest come soon and not like that of the date palm, whose fruit is never seen by those who plant it. May Venus the goddess of all that is loveable, domestic felicity, and national concord, ally herself to-day with Mars. May the union be for the glory of Russia."

"Vivat, vivat, vivat, Peter the Great, the father of his country, the Emperor of all Russia!" shouted the guests raising their glasses of Hungarian wine. The Imperial title, announced publicly neither to Europe nor even to Russia, was accepted here in the circle of "Peter's Eaglets."

In the left wing of the gallery, the ladies' pavilion, the tables had been pushed aside and dancing begun. The music of war trumpets, hautboys, and kettledrums of the Simeon and Preobrazhensky regiments, coming from behind the trees of the Summer Garden, softened by distance and perhaps by the charm of the goddess, sounded here at her feet, like the delicate flutes and *violes d'amour* of Cupid's kingdom, where lambs graze on soft meadows and shepherds loosen the girdles of shepherdesses.

Peter Tolstoi, who was dancing in the minuet with Princess Tsherkassky, hummed in his mellow voice to the strains of the music:

'Tis time to cast thy bow away,
We all are, Cupid, in thy sway.
Thy golden love-awaking dart
Hath reached and wounded every heart.

And affectedly curtsying to the cavalier, as the rule of a minuet demanded, the pretty princess responded with the languid smile of a Chloe to the aged Daphnis. Meanwhile in the dark alleys, bowers, in all the secluded nooks of the

Summer Garden, whispers, rustlings, kisses, sighs of love were heard ; the goddess Venus had begun her reign in the Hyperborean Scythia.

In an oak grove, apart from the rest, so that none could overhear them, a group of servants and pages, belonging to the Tsar's household, were discussing the love exploits of their friends, the court ladies or maidens, after the manner of true Scythians and Barbarians.

In the presence of women they were shy and bashful, but when by themselves they spoke about "women" with brutal shamelessness.

"The wench Hamilton spent a night with the master," calmly announced one of them.

It was Mary Hamilton, the Tsaritsa's lady in waiting.

"The master is gallant, he can't live without mistresses," remarked another.

"It is not her first either," retorted a page, a boy of about fifteen, deliberately spitting and again puffing the pipe which made him sick : "Before the master's time she had a child by Golitsin."

"And how do they manage to get rid of the brats ?" the first one queried in amazement.

"And the husband does not know what his wife is after !" giggled the lad. "I saw with my own eyes just now, from behind the shrubs, how Billy Mons made love to our mistress !"

Wilhelm Mons was the Tsaritsa's Kammerjunker, a foreigner of low origin, yet very adroit and handsome.

Huddling closer together, they began to speak about the strange rumour, which said that, quite lately, when cleaning a stopped up pipe of one of the fountains in the royal garden, the body of an infant was found, wrapped in a palace napkin.

The Summer Garden possessed the inevitable "grotto," met with in all French gardens ; it was a square edifice on the banks of the river Fontanna, rather awkward from the outside, suggesting a Dutch church, while the inside resembled a cave, laid out with large shells, mother of pearl, corals and porous stones ; numerous fountains and water jets flowed into marble basins with that abundance of water, too great for the damp city of Petersburg, yet so dear to the heart of Peter.

Here staid old men, senators, and dignitaries, were also conversing about love and women.

"In olden days true wedlock was sacred, whereas nowadays, lust is considered gallantry, even by the husbands themselves, who with a calm heart watch their wives make love to others and call us fools for staking our honour on so weak a spot. They have given women their freedom; just wait a bit, they will soon master every one of us," grumbled the oldest among them.

A younger one remarked that "free intercourse between the sexes is agreeable natural to all men, not fossilised by ancient customs. The real love passion, unknown in barbarous ages, had begun to possess sensitive hearts;" that "nowadays marriage boorishly reaps in one day all the flowers love tenderly rears for years; and jealousy is the pest of love."

"Fair women have always been facile," decided a middle-aged man, "but no doubt the devils themselves have set up their abode inside the ribs of the present giddy generation. They will hear of nothing but love-making."

"And little girls, stirred by this example, begin to flirt, and only can't do it, poor things, because they are too innocent. Oh! how the desire to please dominates women!"

Here entered her Majesty Catherine, attended by the Kammerjunker Mons and Mary Hamilton, her lady in waiting, a proud Scotchwoman with the face of Diana. The least elderly of the two old men, aware that Catherine was listening to their conversation, began amiably to defend the ladies.

"Truth herself proves the dignified nature of womankind by the fact, that God, at the end of His work, on the last day created Adam's wife, as if without her the world were incomplete. Woman's body alone is composed of all that is most charming in the universe. Add to these advantages her beauty of mind, and how can we help wondering at her perfection, and what excuses can be given by him who does not show due deference to her? Should there be some weakness about women, it is right to remember, how delicately they are made." The oldest of the speakers only shook his head. His face clearly expressed that he was not convinced, that in his opinion "woman was

as far removed from a human being, as a crab was from a fish ; a woman and the devil make a fine match."

In the opening, between the cloven clouds, on the transparent melancholy sky bathed in golden-emerald, appeared the narrow sickle of the newborn moon ; it cast a gentle beam into the depths of a dark alley, where near a fountain surrounded by the semicircle of a tall clipped hedge, on a wooden bench, at the foot of a marble Pomona, there sat a solitary girl of seventeen. She wore a wide dress of pink taffeta embroidered with small yellow florets ; she had a slender waist and a fashionable headdress ; yet so Russian and simple was her face, that it was evident she had only recently left a calm country life, where she had grown up surrounded by nurses, under the thatched roof of an old house. Casting a timid look around her, she undid two or three buttons of her frock and swiftly pulled out a roll of paper, hid in her bosom and warm from the contact. It was a love missive from her nineteen year old cousin, who by the Tsar's command had first been torn from the same peaceful spot, sent to Petersburg, then placed in the navy school connected with the admiralty, and a few days ago had been sent on a man-of-war with other gardes-marines, either to Cadiz or Lisbon—to quote his own expression "to the world's end." By the light of the white night and the moon the young girl read the note, written on ruled lines in large round childish characters :

"My heart's treasure, my angel Nástia. I would like to know why you did not send me the last kiss. Cupid the thief has wounded my heart with his arrow. I suffer greatly, my heart's blood is frozen."

A heart was drawn with blood instead of ink between the lines, the same was pierced by two arrows ; red spots stood for drops of blood.

Then followed verses probably copied from somewhere—

Remember Joy, our merry talk,
Sweet words during every walk,
How long is it since last I saw thee ?
Come my fair dove, come fly to me.
Should my wish be not in vain,
Mad with joy I'd be again.

Having read the love letter, Nástia carefully rolled it up,

hid it again in her bosom, hung her head and covered her face with a handkerchief, scented with "Cupid's sighs."

When she looked up again, a black cloud resembling a monster with gaping mouth had almost swallowed the narrow moon. His last beam reflected itself in the tear which hung on the young girl's eye-lash. She watched the moon disappearing and hummed to herself the only love-song she knew—how it became known to her no one could say :—

Wherever I roam, and wherever I go,
My heart it feels heavy, my spirits are low,
And I, like a dove without wings, must make moan,
For what is in life when my dearest is gone ?
Young am I and yet shedding tear after tear
For the sweetheart who left me in loneliness here. . . .

Everything about her was strange and artificial, "after the manner of Versailles," the fountain, Pomona, the espaliers, her dress of pink taffeta strewn with yellow florets, her hair arrangement "Budding pleasure," and the scent "Cupid's sighs." Only she herself with her quiet grief and gentle song had remained simple, Russian, just as she had been under the thatched roof of her father's country house.

Close to her, from the dark alleys, bowers and every possible nook of the Summer Garden, there continued to come whispers, rustles, kisses and love-sick sighs.

The sound of the minuet, wafted across like shepherds' flutes and *violes d'amour* from Venus' kingdom, with the languid melody :—

'Tis time to cast thy bow away,
Cupid, we all are in thy sway.
Thy golden love-awaking dart
Has reached and wounded every heart !

In the pavilion, round the Tsar's table the conversation continued. Peter was talking with the monks about the origin of Hellenic Polytheism ; he could not conceive how the ancient Greeks, who had displayed sufficient knowledge about natural laws and mathematical principles, could at the same time call their soulless idols gods, and believe in them.

Here Michael Avrámoff could no longer contain himself,

he mounted his hobby and began to prove that the gods exist, that they are in reality evil spirits.

"You talk about them as if you yourself had seen them," said Peter.

"Not I, but others have really seen them, your Majesty,—beheld them with their own eyes," exclaimed Avrámoff triumphantly. He took out of his pocket a fat leather pocket book, found in it two old cuttings from the Dutch newspapers and began to read, translating them into Russian :—

"We are informed from Spain that a stranger has brought with him to Barcelona a Satyr, a man covered with wool as with bark, and having goat's horns and hoofs. He eats bread and milk, does not speak, but only bleats like a goat. This deformity attracts many visitors." The second : "In Jutland fishermen have caught a siren or mermaid. The monster has a human body with a fish's tail. The skin is pale yellow, the eyes are closed, the hair on the head is black. A membrane connects the fingers just like a goose's foot. The fishermen pulled their net to the shore with great difficulty, breaking it in many places. Then the people made a huge tub, filled it with salt water and put the mermaid into it ; they did this in the hope of preserving her from putrefying. This is reported on account of the many rumours current concerning maritime wonders, not all trustworthy, but this one may be believed, because the astonishing sea-monster has been caught."—ROTTERDAM, *April 27, 1714.*"

Printed matter was as a rule believed in, especially foreign news, for if foreigners lie, where could truth be found at all ? Many of the people present not only believed in ghosts, nymphs, were-wolfs, water, house, and wood spirits, but had also seen the like with their own eyes. If wood spirits exist, why should not Satyrs also exist, if nymphs exist why should not mermaids with fish tails also ? And why should not other gods, even this very Venus, also have true being ?

The company were hushed, silenced ; something strange and terrifying seemed to pass through the air ; all suddenly became conscious of doing something they ought not to do.

Lower and lower sank the sky shrouded in black clouds.

Brighter and brighter grew the bluish flashes of thunderless lightning. And these sudden flashes of light in the dark vault seemed to reflect the bluish flame on the altar which continued to glow at the feet of the statue ; or else in the vault, as in an overturned bowl of a gigantic altar, hid by a bank of clouds, black as charcoals, there glowed the Bacchantic flames, sallying forth from time to time in the shape of lightning. The fire of the sky and the flame on the altar, responding to one another, seemed to hold converse about some terrible mystery unrevealed to mankind, yet already enacting itself in earth and sky.

The Tsarevitch, who was sitting not very far from the statue, gazed intently at her, for the first time after the reading of the newspaper cuttings. The nude white body of the goddess seemed so familiar to him, he was almost sure he had seen it before now, and even more than seen it—these very dimples on the shoulders, this virginal curve of the back appeared to him in his most passionate, secret visions, visions he felt ashamed to confess even to himself. Suddenly he remembered to have seen this same curve, these same dimples on the shoulder of his mistress, the serf girl Afrossinia. He felt dizzy, probably from the wine, the heat, the close atmosphere, and all this monstrous festival, so like a nightmare. He glanced again at the statue, and suddenly the white nude body, in the double light of the red smoky illumination vessels and the bluish flame of the tripod, appeared so real, terrible and enticing to him, that he was obliged to cast down his eyes. Was it indeed possible that the goddess Venus should appear to him also, as she did to Avramoff, in the guise of a were-wolf—the serf girl Afrossinia ? He crossed himself in thought.

“Not the Hellenes are to be wondered at, who, ignorant of the Christian law, bowed before lifeless idols,” rejoined Theodosius, continuing the conversation interrupted by the reading, “but, rather we Christians, who, ignorant of true reverence for icons, worship them as idols !”

This started one of those conversations which Peter specially delighted in, about all sorts of false wonders and signs, the deceitfulness of monks, the possessed, nervous epileptic women, saintly madmen, old wives’ tales, and the

superstition of Russian priests. Again Alexis had to listen to all these oft-repeated odious tales: about the shift of the Queen of heaven, which the monks had brought from Jerusalem, as a gift to Catherine, and which was supposed could neither burn nor rot. When the material was experimented on it turned out to be woven of a special fireproof fibre—amianth: about the incorruptible body of the Finnish girl von Grot, whose skin “was like prepared pigskin and when pressed returned like a ball to its shape”; and about other false relics made of ivory which Peter had ordered to be sent in to the Petersburg Kunstkammer as a memento of “superstition now being exterminated by the zeal of the clergy.”

“Yes, there is much deception in the Russian Church concerning miracles,” concluded Theodosius, in his tone of plaintive malignity. He mentioned the last false wonder on record. In a small church near Petersburg an image of the Virgin had appeared, which shed tears, prophesying as it were great mishaps, even the final destruction of the new city. Peter, informed of it by Theodosius, went himself to the church, examined the icon, and exposed the deception. This had happened quite recently. The icon had not yet been sent into the Kunstkammer, and it had meanwhile been kept in the Tsar’s Summer Palace, a small Dutch house, here in the garden, only at a distance of about two yards from the gallery, on the corner between the Fontanna and the Neva. The Tsar, desirous showing it to his guests, ordered one of his servants to fetch the icon. When the man returned Peter left the table and coming out in front of the statue, where there was more room, he, leaning with his back against the marble pedestal and holding the image in his hand, began to give a careful and elaborate explanation of the deceptive mechanism. The guests again thronged round him, crowding, rising on tiptoe, striving to catch a glimpse across one another’s shoulders and heads, just as at the beginning of the festival, when the case containing the statue was being opened. Theodosius was holding the candle.

The icon was an old one. The face was dark, almost black; only the large sorrowful eyes, swollen as with tears, seemed alive. Alexis had always loved and honoured this

image of "God's mother, the Joy of all the sorrowing."

Peter removed the silver trimming set with priceless gems; it came off easily, having been already loosened during the first examination. He then unscrewed the brass screws, which fastened a small piece of new limewood to the back of the icon. In its centre was fixed a smaller piece; it moved easily on a spring, a pressure of the hand was sufficient to work it. Removing both boards Peter pointed to two little cavities hollowed out in the wood just against the eyes of the image. Two tiny sponges soaked with water were placed in them, the water oozed through the almost imperceptible holes bored in the eyes, forming drops which looked like tears.

Peter proved it by an experiment; he moistened the sponges, put them into their cavities, pressed the board and the tears began to flow.

"This is the source of these miraculous tears," said Peter. His face was as calm as if he had just been describing a curious trick of nature, or some unusual object in the *Kunstkammer*.

"Yes, there is much deception," repeated Theodosius with a quiet smile.

All were hushed. Somebody moaned in a low voice, probably a drunkard in his sleep. Someone else tittered so curiously and unexpectedly, that everybody turned round almost in terror. Alexis longed to go away. But some strange torpor held him, as in a nightmare, when the legs refuse to carry one or the voice to cry out. In this lethargy he stood and watched Theodosius holding the light, Peter nimbly and adroitly fingering the wood of the image, the tears trickling down the sorrowful face, and over all there towered the white, terrible alluring body of Venus. He looked on, and an anguish like mortal sickness seized his heart and almost choked him. And it seemed to him that this torture would never end,—that it always had been, and would be.

Suddenly there was a blinding flash of lightning; as if a fiery abyss had yawned above their heads. And through the glass cupola a burning light, painfully white, whiter than the sun, bathed the marble statue. Almost at the same instant a short, deafening peal of thunder was heard,

as though heaven's vault had been cloven and fallen into ruin. A darkness, black and impenetrable, followed the lightning. Suddenly a storm broke out, and moaned, and hissed, and rolled in the darkness ; high wind together with pouring rain and hail ; in the pavilion a general confusion ensued. The piercing shrieks of women were heard—one of them was laughing and crying in hysterics. The terrified people fled, from what, they knew not, knocking, falling and crushing one another. Somebody moaned in despair, " St. Nicholas ! Holy Mother, have mercy upon us." Peter, letting the icon drop, hurried away in search of Catherine. The flame from the overturned tripod, going out, flared up for the last time like the forked sting of a serpent, in the shape of an azure tongue, lighting up the face of the goddess. It alone had remained calm amid the storm, darkness and terror. Someone stepped on the icon. Alexis, stooping to lift it, heard the wood crack. The image had broken in two.

Book II

ANTICHRIST

CHAPTER I

A coffin of pinewood tree
Stands ready prepared for me ;
Within its narrow wall
I'll await the trumpet call.

THIS was the song of certain heretics, the raskolniks called—"The Coffin-liers." "Seven thousand years after the creation of the world," said they, "the second coming of Christ will take place; and should it not happen we will burn the Gospels themselves; as for the other books it is not worth believing them." And they left their houses, lands, goods, and cattle, and every night went out into the fields and woods, put on clean shirts and shrouds, laid themselves in coffins hollowed out of tree trunks, and saying mass waited, expecting at every moment the trumpet call of the Judgment. Such was their idea of "meeting Christ."

Opposite the headland formed by the Neva and the lesser Neva, in the widest part of the river, close to Gagarin's hemp warehouse, among the rafts, barges, and cargo boats, stood the oak-rafts belonging to Tsarevitch Alexis. They had come from Nishigorod to Petersburg for the Admiralty dockyard.

On the night of the Venus festival in the Summer Garden an old burlak was sitting at the rudder of one of these rafts; though it was summer he still wore a torn sheepskin coat and bast shoes. They called him "foolish John," and he passed for a simpleton. For thirty years, day by day, month by month, year by year, he would sit

every night till dawn waiting to "meet Christ," always chanting the same song of the coffin-liers. Sitting quite close to the water on the very edge of the raft, bending over and with both hands clasped round his knees, he looked in expectation on the bits of golden-emerald sky which gleamed through the black torn clouds. His fixed eyes looking from under matted grey hair and his immovable face were filled with terror and hope; slowly swaying from side to side, he sang in a long drawn melancholy voice :—

A coffin of pinewood tree
Stands ready prepared for me ;
Within its narrow wall
I'll await the trumpet call.
When the angels blow,
From the graves will go
Those who in them lie,
To God's throne on high.
Two roads are there to take,
Beware which choice you make !
One leads to heaven fair,
One to old Satan's lair !

" Ivan ! come to supper ! " they called from the other side of the raft. A fire was burning there on stones which had been put together in imitation of a stove, and over it hung on three sticks an iron kettle boiling fish-soup. Ivan did not heed, but went on singing. The group which sat talking round the fire comprised, beside the boatmen and burlaks, the aged schismatic Cornelius, who preached of self-burning and was now on his way to the Kershen forests beyond the Volga ; his disciple, a runaway Moscow scholar named Tichon Zapólsky ; Alexis Furlong, a gunner, deserter from Astrachan ; the caulker Ivan Boudlóff, a sailor under the Admiralty, also a deserter ; the clerk Larion Dokoukin, an old woman Vitalia belonging to the "runners," who to quote her own words "led the life of a bird," always on the move, soaring everywhere, staying nowhere ; her companion Kilikeya the Barefooted, an epileptic woman, who had a "satanic suggestion" in her abdomen ; and many other "people in hiding" who had fled to save themselves from the heavy taxation, soldiering, the cat-o'-nine tails, forced labour, tearing of nostrils, beard shaving,

crossing with two fingers, or some of the other terrors of Antichrist.

"I feel sick at heart," said Vitalia, an alert old woman, wearing a dark loose neckerchief who, though wrinkled, was red-cheeked as an autumn apple. "And, I know not why, the days seem so dark; the sun does not seem to shine as it used to."

"The times are sad, the fear of Antichrist is invading the world, hence this sorrow and heaviness," explained Cornelius, a haggard old man with a broad pleasant face, pock-marked and, apparently, mole-eyed. In reality he had piercingly sharp sight; he wore a "heretic" cape, in shape somewhat monkish, a black under-cassock which had turned brown, and a leather belt with a thong. And whenever he moved, his iron chain, weighing a hundred weight and made of crosses which deeply scored into his flesh, would clang its links together. "I too, father Cornelius, begin to see that these are the last days," groaned the woman. "The world's sands are running short; they say the end will come about the middle of the eighth thousand years."

"No," retorted the old man with decision, "it won't even last as long as that."

"Lord be merciful unto us," sighed one of the company, "God knows His own time; all we can do is to say—God have mercy upon us."

And they all lapsed into silence. Clouds had again covered up the opening of the sky which had become as dark as the Neva. The distant lightning grew brighter and brighter; with each flash the thin taper pinnacle of the Peter and Paul fortress shone forth like a streak of pale gold, and was reflected in the Neva; the flat stone battlements which seemed to be sunken into the banks, and the group of stucco buildings clustering around: mercantile and garrison depôts, hemp sheds and magazines, stood out in black relief. In the distance, on the opposite shore, the lights of the Summer Garden glittered through the trees. As a last breath of the late Northern spring a smell of pine, birch, and aspen was wafted across from the Lake of Keivousary. The small group of people on the flat and scarcely visible raft, lit up by a red fire, between the black

thunder clouds and the dark surface of the river seemed lonely and forsaken, as if hanging in the air midway between two skies and two abysses.

When all had stopped talking such silence ensued, that only the monotonous rippling of the stream under the logs was audible, while from the other end of the raft came along the water the same old melancholy song :—

A coffin of pinewood tree
Stands ready prepared for me ;
Within its narrow wall
I'll await the trumpet call.

“ Friends, is it true,” began Kilikeya, a young woman with a delicately transparent, almost waxen face, and feet terrible to look at, being black as the roots of an old tree (she always went about barefoot even in the keenest frost), “ is it true what I heard to-day in the market, that there is no Tsar in Russia ; that the present Tsar is not the right one, neither a Russian nor of royal blood, but either a foreigner or foreigner’s son, or a Swedish changeling ? ”

“ Neither Swede nor foreigner, but a damned Jew of the tribe of Dan,” declared Cornelius.

“ O Lord, Lord,” again somebody sighed heavily, “ see how the royal race has degenerated ! ”

They began to discuss who Peter was : whether a Swede, a foreigner, or Jew.

“ The devil knows who he is. Whether a witch has hatched or the damp bred him, one thing is certain : he is a were-wolf,” declared the sailor, a young man of about thirty years old, with a wide-awake, intelligent expression on his face, once probably handsome, now disfigured by the branded forehead and torn nostrils.

“ Ay ! My friends, I know, I know positively everything concerning the Tsar,” replied Vitalia ; “ I learnt from an old wandering beggar woman, and the choristers of the Ascension told me just the same. When our Tsar, the pious Peter, was abroad visiting foreign countries he came across the Glass Kingdom ; this Glass Kingdom is ruled by a maiden, who, making sport of him forced him to sit on a red hot tin, and then, having shut him up in a barrel with nails, cast him into the sea.”

"No, not in a barrel, but he was laid in a trunk," some one corrected.

"Well, it does not matter whether it was a barrel or a trunk, but the fact remains that he has been lost ever since, neither seen nor heard of. And in his stead the sea vomited up a Jew of the tribe of Dan, born of an ill-conditioned wench, and nobody knew him. And on his coming to Moscow he began to do as a Jew would; he declined the Patriarch's blessing, would not go to the holy relics in Moscow, aware that the holy place would refuse his approach. Neither did he do honour to the tombs of former pious Tsars, for the simple reason that they were strangers to him and hateful in consequence. He saw no one of the royal family, neither the Tsaritsa nor the Tsarevitch nor the Tsarevenas, fearing they would detect him and say: "You don't belong to us, you are not the Tsar, but a cursed Jew." He did not show himself to the people on New Year's Day, fearing detection, just as Gregory had been detected by the people; he does not keep fast days nor go to church, nor does he wash in the bath-house on Saturdays, but lives dissolutely in a house with the foreigners. Nowadays a foreigner is an important personage in Muscovy; the sorriest foreigner stands higher than a boyar, higher even than the Patriarch himself. He himself, the cursed Jew, publicly dances with foreign courtesans; drinks wine not to the glory of God, but in an indecent ugly way, like a common toper, reeling on the ground and using bad language when drunk. For the amusement of foreigners, or, more likely, for the outraging of all Christian customs, he publicly calls his drink-companions by holy names, one, the most holy Patriarch, others again, Bishop and Archbishop, himself Archdeacon, thus defiling sacred names by applying them to shameful things."

"The abomination of desolation, predicted by Daniel, has come to pass," concluded Cornelius.

Other voices from the crowd chimed in:

"And the Tsaritsa Eudoxia, who is shut up in the Soudal nunnery, tells us: "Have patience, keep to the Christian faith, this is not my Tsar—he is a stranger."

"He is trying his best to make the Tsarevitch imitate him, but he can't succeed; and that is why the Tsar

wants to rid himself of him, and prevent his coming to the throne."

"O Lord, Lord! what a trouble God has sent—the father rises against the son, the son against his father."

"What father is he to him! The Tsarevitch himself says this man is neither father nor Tsar to me."

"The Tsar loves the foreigners; the Tsarevitch does not love foreigners: 'Give me time,' says he, 'and I will soon get rid of them.' A foreigner once came to him and began to talk in an unknown language. The Tsarevitch burnt his clothes and scorched him; the foreigner complained to the Tsar; 'Why do you go to him?' was the answer, 'while I live you will be unhurt.'"

"This is so! they all say when our Tsarevitch comes to the throne then the Tsar and his company will have to do their best to save themselves."

"Truly, truly, it is so," affirmed several voices cheerfully, "the Tsarevitch dearly loves the ancient ways."

"A righteous man!"

"Russia's Hope!"

"Many old women's tales pass current among our folk nowadays; they cannot all be believed or trusted," began Ivan Boudloff, and at once his calm matter of fact words riveted the attention of the whole group. "But I must say, be he Swede or foreigner or Jew—the devil knows best—one thing is certain, ever since God sent him to rule over us we have seen no happy days; life has become hard; there is no peace. Take us mariners and soldiers. It is fifteen years since we began fighting the Swede, we have not disgraced ourselves anywhere, but have shed our blood freely; and yet to this day we see no peace. Summer and autumn we are sent to roam on the seas, the winter is spent among rocks, we are dying of sheer hunger. And the country is ruined to such an extent that in some places not even a sheep remains to the peasant. They say: 'A clever head, a clever head.' If he were clever, he would be able to understand his people's needs. Where does he show his cleverness? He gave us a proof in his civic laws, the institution of the Senate. Yet what good comes of it? Not only more wages are wanted; but ask the people with law-suits if any one of them has been

promptly attended to——Ah ! what is the use of talking ? The whole nation is outraged. He so arranges matters as to drag the last bit of Christianity from our souls, the last bit of life from our bodies. How is it that God tolerates so much cruelty ? But this is not happening in vain ; a change will come, sooner or later, the blood will come over them."

Suddenly one of the audience who had remained silent all this while, a woman named Elena with a simple, kind face, started defending the Tsar. " We don't know how to express it," she said, in a low voice, as if to herself, " but we continually pray—O Lord, bring the Tsar back to our Christian faith ! "

Her timid attempt was silenced however, by indignant voices crying :—

" He is no Tsar ! only a mock-Tsar ; he has squandered himself, goes about as if beside himself."

" He has become quite a Jew, he can no longer live without a sip of blood from time to time. The day he drinks blood, that day he is content and merry, but the day he gets none he can neither eat nor drink."

" Glutton ! he will have eaten everybody soon, for himself there is no extermination."

" May the earth engulf him ! "

" Fools ! Curs ! " interposed with fury the gunner Alexis Furlong, a red-haired man of huge height, with a face now suggesting a beast, now a child, " fools, for not knowing how to defend yourselves ! All of you are doomed soul and body ; you will be mashed up like worms in a cabbage. As for me nothing would please me better than to cut him up into little bits."

Elena weakly sighed and made the sign of the cross ; these words, she confessed afterwards, made her feel hot all over. The others looked with terror at Alexis, while he, fixing his blood-shot eyes on one spot, and clenching his fist, added slowly as if lost in thought,—and there was something yet more terrible in this measured tone than in his fury :—

" I am surprised that no one has finished him off before now. He is always about alone. There are plenty of chances to cut him up half a dozen times over."

Elena grew pale, she wanted to say something, but her moving lips could not articulate a sound.

"Thrice have there been attempts to kill the Tsar," said Cornelius, "but every time has failed: evil spirits attend and protect him."

A fair, puny soldier, with an idiotic, haggard, sickly face, quite a boy, a deserter named Petka Jisla, began to talk hurriedly, stuttering and sobbing like an infant. He told them that three ships had brought branding-irons from abroad to brand people with. Strict watch was kept over them, nobody was allowed near; sentinels being stationed by them on the Cotline island.

These were the new recruit marks introduced by Peter, about which the Tsar wrote in 1712 to the general plenipotentiary Prince James Dolgoruki:—"to mark recruits, prick a cross with the needle on the left hand and rub in powder."

"The marked men receive bread, those who have no marks go without, no matter if they starve. Ah! brethren, brethren, it is a sorry business."

"Famine will bring us all unto the son of perdition to worship him," affirmed Cornelius.

"Some have been already marked," continued Petka, "I among them, lost man that I am."

With evident difficulty he lifted with his right hand the left which hung powerless at his side, brought it to the light, and showed the recruiting mark, stamped with the government stamp.

"When stamped, the hand at once began to wither, first the left only, now the right has began; try as I may to raise and bless myself with it, I cannot."

His companions looked terror-stricken at the dark spot, which seemed like a number of pock marks on the pale yellow, withered, lifeless hand. This was the human brand, the black cross of the crown.

"That is it, quite right," declared Cornelius, "the sign of Antichrist. It is written: 'he will mark them on the hand, he, who receives this mark, will lose the power to bless himself with the sign of the cross; yet his hand will be paralyzed not by chains, but by an oath, and no repentance shall be granted unto such.'"

"Brethren ! brethren ! what have they done unto me ? Had I but known in time they should never have had me alive. They have spoilt a human body ; marked a man like cattle." Petka sobbed convulsively, and large tears rolled down his childish pathetic face.

"Friends," ejaculated Kilikaya, as if struck by a sudden thought, "all this seems to point to one fact, that our Tsar Peter is himself the ——"

She did not finish, the terrible word seemed to die on her lips.

"And what did you think ?" Cornelius looked at her with his little sharp piercing eyes. "He is that very one Himself."

"No, never fear, the veritable one has not yet appeared. He might be his forerunner," tried to put in Dokoukin. But Cornelius stood up, the chain of iron crosses clanking ; he lifted his hand, raised his two fingers in the "schismatic" way, and triumphantly announced :—

"Listen ye Orthodox, this is He who reigns, who has had dominion over you since the year 1666, the year of the Beast. In the beginning, the Tsar Alexis together with the Patriarch Nikon renounced the faith, and in so doing became the forerunner of the Beast. Now following in their footsteps Tsar Peter has finally uprooted all piety ; he has annihilated the Patriarchate ; claimed the Church and divine power, and, against our Lord Jesus Christ, has declared himself supreme head of the Church, the absolute pastor. And vieing with the supremacy of Christ, about whom it is written :—'I am the first and the last,' he called himself Peter the First. In the year 1700, on the first day of January, the new year's day of the ancient Roman god Janus, at a firework entertainment he proclaimed on a screen—'My time has now come.' And he assumed unto himself the name of Christ, in the hymn sung at church in memory of the Poltava victory over the Swedes. And on his return to Moscow, he had young children in white robes placed on triumphal arches and taking part in the procession, to glorify him and sing, "Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest. Lord God appear to us!"—as by God's will, the Jewish children had praised our Lord Jesus Christ on

his entry into Jerusalem. Thus by his title he had elevated himself above every Name of God. For it has been said : under the name of Simon Peter there will appear in Rome the proud prince of this world, Antichrist, and in Russia, which is the third Rome, that Peter has appeared who is the son of darkness, the blasphemer and enemy of God, that is Antichrist. And as it is written : in all things will the false prophet strive to resemble the Son of God, so also does the aforesaid Peter, glorifying himself, say : ' I am a father to the fatherless, a shelter for the wandering, a helper to those in trouble, a defence to the oppressed ' ; he has built hospitals for the sick and the aged ; schools for the young ; the simple and ignorant Russian people he has in a short time made shrewd and clever, and in all knowledge equal to other European nations. He has expanded the Empire, he has reinstated what was stolen, restored what had fallen to ruins, glorified what had been humbled, renewed the old ; he has roused those sleeping in ignorance ; and has created what was not. ' I am gracious, meek, and merciful. Come unto me, and worship me, the living and Almighty God, for I am God, there is none other God but me.' Thus the Beast feigns goodness ; he about whom it is written, ' That Beast is terrible and is like unto none.' Thus a cruel wolf, masked under a sheep-skin, will one day spring forth and swallow everyone. Listen then, ye Orthodox, to the word of the prophet : Go, go forth, go forth from Babylon, oh ! my people and save yourselves, for there is no salvation in cities for the living ; flee, persecuted faithful ones, who have no present abode, but are seeking the Coming. Flee into the woods, the deserts, hide your heads under the earth, in hills and caverns, in the earth's abysses ; for brethren you yourselves see, that we have reached the utmost evil. Antichrist himself has come, and with him the world is ending. Amen."

He finished. A blinding flash of lightning suddenly lit up the man from head to foot, and to those who were looking at him, the small man seemed almost a giant in this glare, and the roll of the dull, as if subterranean thunder, seemed to be the echo of his words, which had filled heaven and earth.

He finished, and all around him remained silent. Again

was heard the dreamy ripple of the stream under the logs, and the languid melancholy song of Ivan wafted across from the other end of the raft:—

Ye hollowed oak trunks, ye will prove
Fit house for us who on earth did move,
Night approacheth, endeth day,
And Death his scythe doth lay
To the root of all that live. . . .

The song made the silence only more intense, more awful. Suddenly, with a rumbling and a hiss, up soared a rocket, dissolving in the dark vault into a rain of iridescent stars. The Neva reflecting them doubled their number in her black mirror. Fireworks flared, screens with transparent pictures were lit, fiery wheels began to whirl, fountains of fire surged forth, and halls appeared, resembling a temple of white sunlike flame. And from the Pavilion overlooking the Neva, where the Goddess already stood, along the smooth surface of the waters, came the cry of the revellers—"Vivat! Vivat! Vivat! Peter the Great! Father of his country! Emperor of all the Russians!" and music rang forth in the air.

"This, brethren, is the last of the signs," exclaimed Cornelius, pointing with his outstretched arm to the rocket. "As St. Hippolitus testifies: 'Antichrist will be glorified, praised by sundry songs and many voices and loud crying. And a light greater than all lights will surround him, the master of darkness. Night will be changed into day, and day into night; the sun and the moon will become red as blood, and he will take the fire away from the heavens.'"

In the centre of the luminous hall appeared the statue of Peter the Sculptor of Russia, in the image of the Titan Prometheus.

"And all will fall down before him," concluded Cornelius, "and exclaim 'Vivat! Vivat! Vivat! who is like unto the Beast? who is able to make war with him; he has brought us fire from the heavens!'"

Nearly all on the raft watched the fireworks terror-stricken. And when, shrouded in clouds of smoke, illumined by many coloured bengal-lights, there appeared the sea monster, with prickly fins and wings and tail covered with scales, floating along the Neva from the fortress

towards the Summer Garden, they deemed this to be the Beast, coming up out of the depths, as predicted in the book of Revelation. Every moment they expected to see Antichrist coming towards them on the water, or flying through the air on wings of fire, amidst thunder and lightning, and armies of evil spirits with him.

"Friends, friends," sobbed Petka, trembling like a leaf, and his teeth chattering, "I feel frightened; we speak about him, but is he himself not somewhere close by? See how we are all troubled!"

"I don't know where you get all this old woman's fear. Ram a pike down his throat, and that'll finish him," boastingly began Furlong; but he too grew pale, and began to quake when Kilikeya, who was sitting next to him, suddenly called out in a piercing voice, fell on the ground, twisting her body in convulsions, and began to shriek.

Kilikeya had been injured in her childhood. Once, so she herself was wont to relate, her stepmother had poured out some soup in a wooden bowl, and passed it to her to eat—reviling her at the same time, saying, "there, sup it up, the devil be with you," and three weeks later she fell ill, and it seemed to her that something had begun to growl audibly within her, like a dog, so that everybody could hear it. And really an evil spirit did seem to growl with human and animal voices within her. She had been imprisoned according to the Tsar's law, concerning such nervous women; she had been questioned, judged, even whipped. She had signed promises, not to call out again under pain of punishment with the lash or of being convicted to life-long labour in the weaving mill. Yet lashes could not cast out demons, and she continued to have fits.

Kilikeya moaned: "I feel sick, so sick," and then she would laugh, and cry, and bark like a dog and bleat like a sheep, and croak like a frog, grunt like a pig, and many other animals did she imitate.

The watch dog, which lived on the raft, roused by these unwonted sounds came out of its kennel: a hungry, lean cur, with sunken flanks and prominent ribs; it walked up to the edge of the raft, and paused at the side of Ivan, who continued to chant, neither seeing nor hearing anything around him, and the dog lifting its muzzle into the air,

its tail between its legs, howled piteously at the fireworks. The howl of the dog and the howl of the sick woman blended into one.

They poured water on Kilikeya. Cornelius bending over her, was reciting incantations for the driving out of demons, blowing and spitting on her face, and lashing it with his leather thong. At last she grew calmer, and fell into a heavy swoonlike slumber. The fireworks had died away. The embers of the fire were faintly glowing; darkness reigned once more. Nothing had happened; Antichrist had not appeared; the fear had passed away. Yet the distress they all felt was more terrible than any fear. They sat as before on the low raft, whose black outlines scarcely stood out against the dark water and the black heavens; their little group, lonely and forlorn, suspended as it were, somewhere in space twixt the two skies. All was quiet, the raft motionless, and yet it seemed to them, they were being precipitated into and were sinking down, engulfed in this gloom, as in some yawning black abyss, the jaws of the Beast itself, the inevitable end of all things. And into this black oppressive darkness, luminous with the blue tremulous heat-lightning, floated from the Summer Garden the music of the minuet, tender as the languid sighs of the kingdom of Venus, where the shepherd Daphnis loosens the girdle of Chloe,

'Tis time to cast thy bow away,
Cupid, we all are, in thy sway.
Thy golden love-awaking dart
Hath reached and wounded every heart!

CHAPTER II

ON the Neva, near the rafts of the Tsarevitch, stood a large barge, which had come from Archangel, laden with Holmogorian pottery. Her owner, the rich merchant Poóshnikoff, belonging to the heretics of the sea coast, gave shelter in his barge to deserters of the old faith, who were obliged to be in hiding. The space between the decks and the poop was divided up into little cells. In one of these Elena had found shelter.

Elena was a peasant woman, the wife of a foreman in the Moscow Mint, Maxim Yereméyeff, a secret iconoclast. When the leader of the iconoclasts, the barber Thomas, was burnt, Maxim fled to the southern towns, leaving his wife behind. It was difficult to decide whether she herself was a heretic or an Orthodox, for she crossed herself with two fingers after the advice of some old man who used to visit her, saying : " thou canst not move God with three fingers," while yet frequenting Orthodox Churches and confessing to Orthodox priests. Notwithstanding the terrible rumours about Peter, Elena believed he was the true Russian Tsar and loved him. She prayed that she might be allowed to behold his Majesty, and for this reason she had come to Petersburg. One thought only possessed her : that God might grant the Tsar repentance, bring him back to his father's faith, make him cease from persecuting the people of the old faith, and thus give them, in their turn, a chance of joining the Orthodox church. Elena had composed a special prayer for the unification of the church, which she meant to have shown to her confessor, but could not find the courage, as it seemed so badly written. She

visited monasteries, she engaged an old woman for six weeks to read the acathistus for the Tsar at the Ascension church and at another dedicated to the Virgin of Kazan. She herself would kneel two or three thousand times a day for him. But all this did not seem sufficient for her, and she resolved on a last desperate remedy. She made her nephew Vassia, a lad of fourteen, write out the prayer she had composed for the Tsar and the uniting of the church, sewed a cover for an icon, and putting the prayer in the lining, gave it to a priest in the Church of the Assumption, making no mention of the hidden letter.

After the conversation on the raft, Elena returned to her cell on the barge, and when she recalled all she had heard that night about the Tsar, she for the first time asked herself whether after all it was not true, that God could not be moved for such a Tsar.

For a long time she lay motionless in the oppressive darkness of her cabin cell, her eyes wide open, bathed in cold sweat. At last she got up, lit a remnant of a wax church taper and placed it in the corner of the closet before the icon of the Virgin, hung on the wooden partition. It was the same Virgin whom Peter had been exhibiting at the foot of Venus. She knelt, bowed to the ground three hundred times and began to recite with tears and sighs that same forlorn prayer, now sewn into the cover of the icon, at the church of the Assumption.

"Hear me, thou Holy Church, with all the hosts of Cherubim and Seraphim, with all the companies of prophets, patriarchs, saints and martyrs, the Gospels, and all the sacred words that compose the Gospel, remember ye our Tsar Peter! Hear me, Holy Apostolic Church, together with all local images and little icons, with all apostolic books and holy lamps, the censers and candles, the sacred coverings and goodly palls, the stone walls and iron slabs, all fruitful trees and flowers! I implore thee, beautiful sun, pray thou the Lord for our Tsar Peter, and thou young moon with thy stars! O sky and thy mists! O terrible clouds and stormy winds and breezes! O fowls of the air! blue sea, great rivers, small brooks and lakes! pray ye the heavenly King for our Tsar Peter! Fish of the sea, cattle in the fields, beasts of the wood, meadows, forests, moun-

tains all the earth's increase, pray ye the heavenly King for our Tsar Peter ! ”

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A thin partition separated Elena's closet from a more spacious cell occupied by Cornelius and his disciple Tichon. Not a word did Tichon say during the conversation on the raft, yet he had followed it with greater interest than any one else. When the group had dispersed, Cornelius went ashore to confer with some other heretics about the approaching great self-burning, "the Red Death," of thousands of persecuted people belonging to the old faith ; a rite which was to take place in the woods beyond the Volga. Tichon had returned to his floating cell alone, and had gone to bed. Yet like Elena in the adjacent compartment, he could not sleep, but kept thinking over what he had heard that night about the Tsar. He felt that his future hung on these thoughts, that the moment was approaching which, like a sword, would cleave his life in twain. "It seems now as though I were on a knife's edge," he said to himself, "on whichever side I fall, in that direction will I go."

Together with thoughts about the future rose memories of the past.

Who was this Tichon?

Tichon was the only son, the last offspring of the once noble family of the princes Zapólsky, long since fallen into disgrace and poverty. His mother died at his birth, his father, a leader of the Streltsy, took part in the mutiny against Peter, supporting the Miloslavskis, ancient Russia and the old faith. During the terrible trial of 1698 he was sentenced, tortured in Preobrazhensky torture chamber, and then executed on the Red Square in the Kremlin. All his other relatives and friends were also executed or banished. The orphaned Tichon, but eight years old, remained in the charge of his attendant, Yemelián Pahómitch. The child was weak and puny, and suffered from fits like one "possessed." He loved his father with passionate tenderness. Anxious for the boy's health, Pahómitch kept from him the knowledge of his father's death, by telling Tichon that his father had gone away on business to his distant patrimony in the Sarátoff government. But the child cried and pined, and glided like a shadow about the large empty house, his heart foreboding some calamity.

At last he could bear it no longer. One day, having again vainly sought to learn the truth, he ran out of the house by himself, hoping to reach the Kremlin where an uncle of his lived, and to ask him about his father. The uncle was, however, no longer alive; he had been executed at the same time as Tichon's father.

At the Spasski gate the boy met large carts laden with corpses of the executed Streltsy, thrown together anyhow, half naked. Like slaughtered cattle, fresh from the slaughterhouse, they were taken to a common grave, the refuse pit, and there buried together with filth and carrion, by the express order of the Tsar. Beams stuck out from the walls of the Kremlin, on which numerous bodies hung like "Polti," a salt Astrachan fish which is hung in bundles to dry in the sun.

The people all day long silently crowded the Red Square, not daring to come near the place of execution, but looking on from afar. Making his way through the crowd, Tichon perceived near the Lóbnoye place some long thick logs surrounded by pools of congealed blood. These served for the executioners' blocks. The victims crowding against one another, as many as thirty men at once, would lay their heads on the logs in rows. While the Tsar was drinking in a hall with windows overlooking the square, his boyars, fools and favourites were chopping off heads. Once the Tsar, dissatisfied with the way they did their work—the hands of the inexperienced headsmen were trembling—ordered twenty of the victims to be brought to his banqueting table, and there slew them with his own hands to the accompaniment of jeers and music. He drank a glass of wine, chopped off a head; glass after glass, head after head. Wine and blood flowed together.

Tichon saw the gallows erected in the shape of a cross for the mutinous Streltsy priests. The hangman was Nikita Zotoff, the mock patriarch. A great number of wheels with the mutilated bodies still hanging to them; iron spikes and stakes with half putrefied heads. The Tsar's command forbade their being taken off till they had completely rotted. The air was one awful stench. Crows hovered over the place in large flocks.

The boy fixed his eyes on one of the heads. It stood out

black against the transparent azure of the sky, all strewn with cloudlets of delicate rose and golden hue ; while further off, the domes of the Kremlin churches glowed like living embers. The evening bell rang out in the still air. Suddenly Tichon felt the sky, the domes, the very earth go from under his feet, while he himself was falling into some bottomless abyss : he had recognized his father's face in that head with black sockets for eyes.

The drum rolled, a division of the Preobrazhensky regiment came round the corner ; it accompanied carts with fresh victims. The condemned sat in white shirts with calm faces, holding lighted tapers in their hands. A tall man on horseback rode in front of them. His face too was calm, yet terrible. This was Peter. Tichon had never seen him before, but he at once recognized him, and it seemed to the child that the dead head of his father with its blank eye-sockets was looking straight into the Tsar's eyes. The next moment he swooned. The crowd falling back in terror would have crushed the boy, had not an old man noticed him. This man, an old friend of Pahómitchi, a certain Gregory of Talitsa, lifted him and up carried him home. In the night Tichon had a fit such as he never had before. It was a wonder he survived.

This Gregory of Talitsa, a poor unknown scribe, who lived by copying books and manuscripts, was one of the first to prove that Tsar Peter was the Antichrist. This was the charge brought against him at his trial, " that prompted by too great a zeal against Antichrist, and a doubtful heretic fear, he began to spread among the people evil words of blame and slander against the Tsar." Having compiled booklets about the " coming of Antichrist," and " the end of the world," he thought of printing and freely distributing them among the people, in order to rouse them against the Tsar. Gregory often used to visit Pahómitch and talk with him about the Tsar, the Antichrist, and the last days. The monk Cornelius, who was living in Moscow at that time, took part in these conversations. Young Tichon used to listen to these old men, who, like three illboding crows, would collect at dusk in the empty house and caw : " the end of the world is drawing nigh ; hard times, evil years have come ; true faith, the stone wall, the

strong pillar of Christ, has disappeared—Christianity has perished. Antichrist will come at the consummation of time; the whole world will be set on fire and burn sixty ells deep into its crust, because of our great transgressions." And then they would relate a vision of "some vile serpent, which creeps and wriggles about, hanging down from the archdeacon's shoulder instead of the holy stole during the service in a Niconian church; or at night, coiling round the walls of the Tsar's dwelling, slips its head inside, and whispers into the Tsar's ear." These melancholy conversations would pass into still more melancholy songs:

Christ, the heaven's eternal King,
Whose glory through the world doth ring,
Bids us, his beloved people,
In lone deserts, shady caves,
Darksome forests, refuge take;
Bury deep ourselves in sand,
Strewn with ashes walk the land,
Die in hope and never fear,
For God's kingdom draweth near!

Tichon listened with special eagerness to tales about the secret settlements, amid dark forests and bogs beyond the Volga, and about the legendary and invisible city—Kítesh on the Lake of Light. The site of the city appeared to be a lonely wood; yet there were churches, houses, monasteries, and numbers of people. In summer church bells are heard at night ringing on the lake's surface and the clear waters reflect the golden domes of the churches. There the true kingdom on earth is, in peace, quiet and eternal joy; holy fathers have flourished there, like lilies, cypresses and date palms, like pearls and heavenly stars. From their lips unceasing prayer to God rises like the breath of sweet-scented thyme and choice incense, and at night their prayer is visible like fiery sparkling pillars, and the light is so strong that it is possible to read and write without a candle. God loves and cherishes them as the apple of His eye, and His invisible hand is ever over them. And they shall experience neither sorrow nor affliction from the Beast; only for us sinners do they grieve day and night for our apostasy and Russia's, and

for the dominion of Antichrist over us. One road only leads to this invisible city. It is narrow, surrounded by all sorts of wonders and terrors, and winds among thickets, through woody dales, and no one can find it, except those whom God Himself leads to this serenely quiet refuge. Listening to the tales, Tichon longed to be in these dark forests and lone deserts. With inexpressibly sweet melancholy would he repeat after Pahomitch the poem about prince Joseph, the young hermit :—

Fair solitude ! my heart's desire,
Through forest and mire,
Over hill, dale, and peak,
Will I wander and seek
A place for my hut.
Thou emerald vault,
Under thee will I roam
To full heart's delight.
Thy cuckoo's call
Shall teach me all,
Dry roots will be
Eden's food for me,
Thy sparkling springs
Mine only drink.

From earliest childhood Tichon was subject to a strange sensation, quite unlike anything else ; a feeling of almost painful anguish, coupled with a delicious sweetness : it seemed ever new, yet ever familiar, and generally intimated the approach of a fit. Terror and surprise mingled with a reminiscence as from some other world, but the prevalent elements were curiosity and expectation, and a desire, that what was about to happen should happen quickly. He never mentioned this to any one, and even if he would, he could not have found words to express it. Later on, when his consciousness and thinking power increased, this sensation became tinged with thoughts about the end of the world and the second coming.

At times the most sinister croaking of the old men would leave him unmoved, while something unexpected, a colour, a sound, a scent could rouse in him the same feeling with sudden force. His house stood on the slope of the Sparrow hills, beyond the river Moscow. The garden abruptly terminated in a steep cliff. From this spot the whole of

Moscow could be seen : a mass of black log structures—very much like a village—and towering above them, the white stone walls of the Kremlin and the countless golden domes of churches. Hence, too, the boy would often watch those grand and terrible sunsets, which sometimes occur in a late, stormy autumn. In the clouds, which appeared now livid blue, purple, black or flaming red, now as it were bloody, he fancied he could discern at one time a giant serpent which had coiled round Moscow, at another a Beast with seven heads with a woman sitting on it, having a cup in her hand full of abominations : now he saw the host of angels pursuing demons, wounding them with arrows of fire and causing streams of blood to flow over the heavens, or again the radiant Zion, the invisible city, which descending out of heaven, was resplendent with the glory of the coming Lord. It seemed as though the mystery, destined to be revealed on earth, was already being enacted in the heavens. And the familiar presentiment of the final end of all things entranced the boy. This same presentiment was also roused by everyday occurrences, even by the merest trifles ; by the smell of tobacco ; by the first sight of a Russian book printed in Amsterdam by order of Peter, in the new civil characters ; by the signs over the new shops in the German quarter ; by a special form of wig, which had long, curious locks like Jew's ringlets or dog's ears ; or by the peculiar expression on Russian faces, recently bearded, now clean-shaven.

One day, Yereméich, the beekeeper, an old man of eighty years, who lodged in their garden, was captured by the royal commissioners at the town gate ; they forcibly shaved off his beard and cut short the lappets of his coat according to the regulation measure. The old man returned sobbing like a child, fell ill and shortly died of grief. Tichon loved the old man and was sorry for him, yet when he first caught sight of him, clean-shaven, with his coat shortened, sobbing most piteously, the boy burst into a laugh, but one so strange and unnatural that Pahómitch dreaded another fit. In this laugh, too, there was the fear of the end of the world.

Once in winter a comet appeared, " a star with a tail," so Pahómitch called it. The boy all the time longed to see

it, yet did not dare to look ; he used to purposely turn away his head, and close his eyes. But one night he saw it quite unexpectedly, when Pahómitch was carrying him across a snowdrifted lane to the bath-house. At the end of this lane between the black loghouses, rising just above the white snow, at the very edge of the dark blue sky, sparkled a large, delicately transparent star ; it seemed to be gliding away, as it were, into infinite space. It was not terrible, on the contrary so familiar, so welcome, so fair, that he gazed and could not gaze enough. The old feeling, stronger than ever, clutched his heart with unendurable terror and delight. He stretched himself towards the star, as if now only awakening, with a tender, dreamy smile. At the same time Pahomitch felt terrible convulsions shake the little body. A cry escaped the boy ; he had his second epileptic fit.

At the age of sixteen, he was compelled, together with other children belonging to the nobility, to attend the school of "Mathematical, Nautical, that is Maritime, and cunning Arts." The school was located in the Súchareva tower, where James Bruce was engaged on astronomical observations. The astronomer was considered to be a sorcerer and magician : a squinting woman, who sold soaked apples in a street close by, had seen Bruce one winter's night flying from the tower straight to the moon, astride of a telescope. Nothing in this world would have induced Pahómitch to send the child to this cursed place, but the boys were taken there by force.

Minors,¹ who had been in hiding on their estates, some even married, babes of thirty or forty years of age, had been brought hither by compulsion, and now sat next to children on the same bench. They learnt from the same book, which had a picture representing a teacher beating with rods a schoolboy laid across a bench. Below ran the inscription, "Let every boy learn in quiet." All the primers were well supplied with verses about the rod :

¹ Minors are descendants of noble families who had not yet acquired the right of alienation over their immovable property until they had served seven years in the army or ten years in a civil capacity:—See p. 98, "A History of Russia." W. R. Morfill.

God bless the woods for evermore,
 Of useful rods the living store ;
 Birch is for youth the needful kind,
 Nought but stiff oak brings age to mind.

It was prescribed by a royal ukase that a number of strong soldiers should be chosen from the Guards Regiment, one of whom, lash in hand, should be present in each room during the lessons ; and should one of the pupils misbehave, he was to be lashed, irrespective of his rank or family. But neither rods nor lashes could knock learning into their heads ; both young and old learnt badly. Sometimes in moments of despair they would sing, " the Song of Babylon." The older ones, their voices hoarse with excessive drink, would start :

We with school life can't agree,
 The use of rods is far too free.

The shriller young voices chimed in :—

Sorry and sad
 Is every lad.

then both high and low would join in the chorus.

Tichon would have learnt little in the school had he not attracted the attention of one of his teachers, the Pastor Glück, a native of Königsberg. Glück, who had acquired a kind of Russian from a runaway Polish monk, came to Russia " to teach," quoting his own words, " the Muscovy youths, who were soft and impressionable as clay." He was soon disillusioned however, not so much by the youths themselves, as by the Russian method employed in training them, " like horses," knocking knowledge into their heads with whips. Glück was kind and clever in spite of being a drunkard ; sorrow drove him to drink, because not only Russians but even Germans considered him mad. He was engaged upon an enormous task, the writing of commentaries on "*Newton's Commentary to the Apocalypse*" ; a book in which all Christian revelations concerning the end of the world were proved by minute astronomical calculations, based on the laws of gravitation, laid down in Newton's recently published "*Philosophæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*."

He discovered in his pupil Tichon an extraordinary gift for mathematics ; he loved him dearly, as his own kin.

After a glass or two, he would converse with Tichon as with his dearest friend, forgetful of his age. He used to tell him about the new teachings in philosophy ; about Bacon's "Magna Instauratio," Spinoza's "Geometrical Ethics," Descartes' "Vortices," "The Monads of Leibnitz" ; but the greatest inspiration kindled in him when talking about the great discoveries in astronomy, made by Copernicus, Kepler and Newton. The boy could not follow all he heard, yet he listened to these accounts of scientific wonders as eagerly as he did to the talks of the three old men about the legendary town.

As to Pahómitch, he considered all foreign science, especially astrology and astronomy, blasphemous. "The damned Copernicus rivals God Himself," he used to say, "he has lifted the heavy globe into the air ; it is nothing but a dream, all this nonsense about the sun and the stars being fixed while the earth alone goes round ; it is clean contrary to Holy Writ. Theologians laugh at him."

"True philosophy," Pastor Glück was wont to say, "is not only useful, but even necessary to faith. Many of the Holy Fathers excelled in philosophy. Knowledge of nature does not impede Christianity, and God honours him who strives to explore nature. To reason about the created tends to the glory of the Creator, for it is written ; 'the heavens declare the glory of God.'"

A vague instinct, however, told Tichon that this reconciliation between knowledge and faith was not quite as simple and easy even to Glück, as the latter believed, or tried to believe. It was not without reason, that sometimes, after a learned debate with himself about the plurality of worlds and the incomprehensibility of cosmic space, the drunken old man, oblivious of his pupil's presence, would in exhaustion lay his bald head on the table-edge, his wig awry, dazed not so much with wine, as by the confusing metaphysical thoughts, and groan, repeating Newton's celebrated words :—

"O Physica—save me from Metaphysica !"

One day Tichon found on his teacher's table a manuscript collection of Spinoza's letters, which had been brought from

Holland. Tichon, nineteen at that time and about to leave school, could read Latin fluently. He opened the book, the first lines he chanced to see were these : " There is much in common between man's nature and God's, as between the constellation of the Dog and the dog, the barking animal. For I believe that a triangle, if it could speak, would in like manner say that God is eminently triangular, and a circle, that the Divine nature is in an eminent manner circular. And in another letter concerning the Eucharist : " Oh, foolish youth ! Who has so bewitched you as to make you believe in the possibility of swallowing something holy and eternal ? as if holy and eternal things could remain in your bowels ! Stupendous are the sacraments of your church, they are contrary to reason ! " Tichon closed the book, he read no further. For the first time in his life thought had roused in him the old feeling of terror at the end of all things, which so far had only been called forth by external impressions.

In the Súkharev tower, James Bruce had a well-stocked library, a cabinet of mathematical, mechanical and other instruments, also a collection of natural objects : animals, insects, plants, various ores and minerals, antiquities, old coins, medals, cut stones, larvae, and foreign, as well as Russian curiosities. Bruce had commissioned Glück to catalogue all the books and objects. Tichon helped him, and spent whole days in the library.

One bright summer evening he was sitting on the top of a folding library ladder, which moved on wheels, before a wall ranged with books from top to bottom ; he was sticking numbers on the backs of books, comparing the new catalogue with the old illiterate one, in which the names of foreign books were copied out in Russian characters. Through the high windows, glazed after the manner of old Dutch houses with little round pieces of glass fixed in a network of lead, the slanting rays of sunshine fell like sheaves of luminous dust upon the sparkling brass instruments ; on the heavenly spheres, astrolabes, compasses, bevels, draught compasses, measurement scales, levels, telescopes, microscopes ; the various stuffed birds and animals, the huge bone from a mammoth's head, monstrous Chinese idols and marble statues of beautiful Hellenic gods ; the

interminable rows of books uniformly bound in leather and parchment. Tichon enjoyed his work, here among the books. There reigned the calm, soothing peace of a wood, or of some old cemetery, which, forsaken by men, is lovingly visited only by sunshine. No sound interrupted the stillness save the evening chimes, which suggested the bells of the legendary town Kitesh, and the voices which came through the open door of the adjoining room where Bruce and Pastor Glück, having finished their supper, now sat talking and smoking over their wine.

Tichon had just fastened new numbers on some quarto and octavo volumes which were described in the old catalogue under No. 473 as *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon in English*, 3 vols. ; under No. 308, *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia*, by Descartes, in Dutch ; under No. 532, *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, by Isaac Newton. Returning the books to their places, Tichon found at the back of the shelf an old mouse-eaten octavo, No. 461, *Leonardo da Vinci*, a treatise on painting, in German. This was the first German translation of *Trattato della Pittura*, issued at Amsterdam, in the year 1582 ; a leaflet with a wood-cut portrait of Leonardo had been placed in the book. Tichon gazed intently at this face, strange, unknown, and yet so familiar, as if he had once seen it in a dream. He thought that Simon the magician, who could fly in the air, must surely have had a similar face.

The voices in the neighbouring room seemed to grow louder and louder, Bruce was disputing some matter with Pastor Glück. They spoke in German. Tichon had learnt the language from the pastor ; a few stray words struck him ; his curiosity was aroused and he remained, with Leonardo's book still in his hand, trying to catch the drift of their conversation.

"How is it you don't see it, Reverend Sir, that Newton was no longer in his right senses when he wrote his Commentaries on the Apocalypse ?" said Bruce. "Later on he himself confesses it, in a letter addressed to Bentley, on September 13, 1693, 'I have lost my coherency of thought and no longer feel the old vigour of reason,' in other words, he simply went into his dotage."

"Your Excellency, I would rather be mad with Newton

than reasonable with the rest of us bipeds ! ” exclaimed Glück, tossing off another glass of wine.

“ There is no accounting for taste, my good sir,” continued Bruce, with a dry, short, wooden laugh, “ but here’s something more curious still. At the time Newton wrote his Commentaries, in Moscovy, the other extremity of the world, barbarians called ‘Raskolniks,’ have in their turn compiled Commentaries on the Apocalypse, and come to very much the same conclusions as Newton. Daily expecting the Day of Doom, and the Second Coming, some lay themselves in coffins and say their own funeral service ; others burn themselves. They are hunted and persecuted ; for my part I would say of these unfortunate people, in the words of Leibnitz, ‘ I do not like savageries, and would prefer to let everybody live in peace.’ As for those who are calmly awaiting the end of the world, their error seems to me quite innocent. Another thing strikes me as most curious, that the extreme West and the extreme East, the greatest enlightenment and the greatest ignorance, meet in these Apocalyptic deliriums. It is enough to suggest that the end of the world is drawing nigh and that we shall all go to the devil very soon ! ”

Again he laughed his sharp, wooden laugh and then added something Tichon could not hear, but it was evidently something very heterodox, for Pastor Glück, whose wig had, as usual at the end of his supper, slipped to one side of his drowsy head, suddenly jumped up in a fury, pushed back his chair and was going to run out of the room. Bruce kept him back, however, and a few kind words reassured him : he was the only patron Glück had. He loved and esteemed him for his disinterested pursuit of knowledge ; yet, being himself a sceptic, or as many asserted a thorough atheist, he could not see the poor Pastor, the Don Quixote of astronomy, without being tempted to tease him and scoff at the unlucky commentaries on the Apocalypse—the reconciliation of science and religion.

Bruce was of opinion that one or the other had to be chosen—either faith without knowledge, or knowledge without faith.

He filled Glück’s glass and, in order to console him, began to inquire about the details of Newton’s Apocalypse. At

first the old man answered reluctantly, but after a while he related with enthusiasm Newton's conversation with his friend concerning the comet of 1680. "One day, when asked about it, instead of giving a direct answer he opened his Principia and pointed to a place where it was said 'Stellae fixae refieri possunt. Fixed stars can be renewed by comets falling upon them.' 'Why did you not write about the sun as plainly as you did about the stars?' 'Because the sun concerns us more,' replied Newton, and then added with a laugh, 'For the rest, I have said sufficient for those who desire to understand.'

"As a moth attracted by the light, so will the comet fall into the sun and increase the solar heat to such an extent, that everything on earth will be consumed by fire. As it is written in the Holy Scriptures: 'The heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.' Then the prophecies will be accomplished both of him who believed, and of him who knew.

"*"Hypotheses non fingo!"*" he concluded with an inspired air, repeating Newton's great saying.

Tichon was still listening, and the ancient prophetic cawings of the three old men seemed to fit in with the most exact deductions of science. Closing his eyes, he saw a lonely lane, banked up with snowdrifts, and at its end, rising just above the white snow, between the black houses, on the very edge of the dark blue sky, a large, delicately-transparent star. And again, just in as childhood's days, the familiar sensation clutched his heart with unbearable fear and joy. He dropped Leonardo's book, which in its fall caught the tube of the astrolabe, and with a loud crash they both fell to the ground. In hurried Glück. He knew Tichon was subject to fits, and perceiving him at the top of the ladder, pale and trembling, hastened to him, caught him in his arms, and helped him down. This time the fit did not come on. Bruce too had come in. They sympathetically tried to make Tichon talk; but he remained silent, he felt that it was impossible to discuss *this* with anybody.

"Poor lad!" said Bruce apart to Glück, "I feel almost convinced that our talk has frightened him, they are all alike here, one idea seems to possess them—the thought about

the end of the world. I have noticed of late that the madness seems to spread among them like an epidemic. God alone knows where this unhappy people will end ! ”

On leaving the school, Tichon was expected to enter the ranks of the army, like other young men belonging to the nobility. Pahómitch had died. Glück was preparing for a journey to Sweden and England, commissioned by Bruce to buy new mathematical instruments. He invited Tichon to accompany him. Tichon, forgetting all his childish superstitions and Pahómitch's warnings, gave himself with ever increasing love to the study of mathematics. His health had improved and his fits did not recur. A long-cherished curiosity drew him to foreign lands, almost as mysterious to him as the invisible legendary town. Thus, owing to Bruce's intervention, Tichon Zapolski, scholar of the Navigation School, was by the Tsar's decree ordered, along with other Russian youths, to finish his studies abroad. They arrived with Glück in Petersburg in the beginning of June, 1715. Tichon was twenty-five years old, the same age as the Tsarevitch Alexis, yet he looked a mere boy. The trading vessel, which was to take them to Stockholm, was due to leave Kronsloot in a few days.

Suddenly all in Tichon's life had changed ! Petersburg, in its general aspect so unlike Moscow, had startled Tichon. For days he would wander about the streets looking in amazement at the endless canals, prospects, houses erected on piles, driven into the yielding mud of the marshes, all in a row, along a straight line, according to a law, which forbade any new building either to go beyond or fall short of the prescribed line, modest whitewashed huts amidst woods and waste lands, often roofed in the Finnish manner with turf and birch-bark, palaces of elaborate structure, after the Prussian fashion, melancholy garrison dépôts, ammunition stores, sheds, churches with Dutch spires, and striking clocks—everything was flat, ordinary, colourless, very much like a dream-vision. At times, on dull mornings, it seemed to him that the city, shrouded in a muddy yellow mist, would lift with the fog and vanish like a dream. In the legendary city that which is, remains invisible, while here in Petersburg on the contrary, the visible is that which is not ; yet both cities were equally visionary. And again there arose



within him that strange feeling, which he had not experienced for a long time—the presentiment of the end. Only it no longer resolved itself into ecstasy and fear, but oppressed him with a more definite anguish.

One day, on the Troitsa Square near the Four Frigates coffee house, he met a tall man wearing the leather jacket of a Dutch skipper. And just as in Moscow, on the Red Square near the Lóbnoye Palace, where his father's head on the spike had looked with its empty eye-socket straight into that tall man's very eyes, Tichon again recognized him—the Tsar Peter. The terrible face suddenly explained to him the terrible town—they both bore the same impress.

That same day he met the monk Cornelius; he was delighted to see him and did not leave him again. He slept the night in the old man's cell and spent his days on the rafts and barges among the “hidden runaway folk.” He listened to their tales about the lives of great hermits, who lived in the north, in the woods along the sea coast, the Onega and Olonitz where Cornelius, on leaving Moscow, had spent many years; about terrible burnings, where many thousands had sought a fiery death. From the barge Cornelius was now going to preach the Red Death in the woods beyond the Volga. Tichon had not studied in vain; much of what these people believed he no longer could believe; he thought differently, but felt the same as they, and what was more important still—common to them all was *the presentiment of the end*. That about which he never could speak, which none of the learned would have comprehended, these people understood and by it alone they lived. All he remembered Pahomitch telling him in his earliest childhood now suddenly had revived in his soul with new force. Again he felt drawn to the woods, the deserts, the secret settlements and peaceful refuges. Again through the air of the white night he seemed to hear over the Neva the bells of that visionary city, in the chimes of the Dutch clocks, again with languid melancholy and yearning he would repeat the ballad about Prince Joseph:—

Fair solitude! my heart's desire
Through forest and mire
Over hill, dale, and peak. . . .

He had to decide, to choose one or the other course : either to return to the world and live there like all men, serve a man who had destroyed his father and was likely to destroy the whole of Russia ; or once for all turn his back upon the world, become a beggar, a wanderer, one of those " hidden, runaway folk," who have here no continuing city, but seek one to come ; to the West with Pastor Glück, or to the East, the legendary city, with Cornelius the monk. Which should he choose ? whither should he go ? he had not yet made up his mind ; he wavered, tarried with the final decision. He seemed to wait for something. But this night, after the conversation on the raft about Peter, the Antichrist, he felt that it was impossible to delay any longer. The ship was sailing for Stockholm in the morning, and on the morrow Cornelius, threatened with arrest, was obliged to flee from Petersburg. He urged Tichon to come with him.

" I am just upon the sword-edge," he again thought, " and whichever side I happen to fall on, in that will I abide. There is but one life, one death ; a second blunder won't mend the first."

Yet at the same time Tichon felt powerless to decide, and that two destinies, like the two ends of a deadly noose, joined and tightening, seemed to press and strangle him. He got up, took from the shelf a manuscript—" *The Meditations of St. Hyppolitus concerning the second coming*," and in order to escape from thought, began looking at the title pictures by light of the oil-lamp burning before the image. One of them represented Antichrist, sitting on a throne, wearing the green uniform of the Preobrazhensky regiment with red facings and brass buttons ; on his head, a three-cornered hat and a sword by his side ; his face resembled that of Tsar Peter, and he was pointing forward with his hand. In front of him, to the right, columns of the Preobrazhensky and Simeon Guards were marching towards a monastery among dark woods. Far above, on a hill with three caves, some monks were praying. The soldiers, guided by quaint blue demons, were climbing up the mountain slope. Below ran the legend : " Then will he send into the hills and caves and holes of the earth his armies of evil spirits to seek out those who hide from his sight and bring them to worship him." On another picture soldiers were shooting

at monks who were bound : “ These are falling by Satan’s hand.”

Behind the wooden partition Elena continued to sigh and weep, praying to the heavenly King for the Tsar Peter. Tichon laid down the book and fell on his knees before the icon. Yet he could not pray. Anguish seized him, such as he had never felt before. The flame of the burnt-out lamp flared up a last time and then went out ; gloom surrounded him, and something seemed to creep up and clutch his throat with a dark, soft, warm hairy paw. He grew short of breath. His body was bathed in a cold sweat. And again it seemed to him he was flying headlong, sinking down into some black gloom, into an abyss—the jaws of the Beast itself. “ It does not really matter,” thought Tichon, the thought flashed on his mind with unbearable clearness, it did not really matter which of the two paths he chose, go east or go west, here or there, at either extremity of the earth there ruled the one foreboding—“ *The end is approaching.*” For as the lightning comes from the east and shineth even unto the west, so should also the coming of the Son of man be. And it seemed to him that he—Tichon—had already beheld this encircling lightning. “ Even so, come Lord Jesus ! ” he exclaimed. At that very instant the cell window was lit up with a terrible white light. A deafening crash followed. It seemed as though the sky was rent and falling. It was the same lightning which had so startled the Tsar Peter that he let the icon drop at the foot of Venus. Elena heard, through the howling, hiss and rumbling of the storm, a terrible unearthly scream. Tichon for the third time in his life was seized with an epileptic swoon.

He recovered consciousness on the deck of the barge, where he had been brought from the close cell to revive. It was early morning, blue sky above, white mist below. A star was glistening in the east through the mist, it was the star of Venus. On the isle of Keivoussary, crowning the dome of the house of Boutourlin, the Metropolitan of the Thrice-Drunken Conclave, stood the gilt statue of Bacchus. Lit up by the first ray of the rising sun, it glowed like a red star through the mist. The earthly star exchanged mysterious glances with the heavenly one. The mist became roseate, as if blood were entering the pale bodies of phan-

toms. The marble body of the goddess, in the middle pavilion over-looking the Neva, glowed as if alive. She smiled her eternal smile at the sun, rejoicing that he rose even here amid the hyperborean night. The body of the goddess shone ethereal and roseate in the shroud of mist, the mist glowing like the body of the goddess. The mist was her body. In her all existed, and she in all.

Tichon remembered the thoughts that had thronged his mind during the night, and he felt in his soul a calm determination not to return to Pastor Glück, but to escape with Cornelius.

* * * *

The storm had shifted the barge and its bow was now touching the raft where the conversation about Antichrist had taken place last night. Ivan had found time to get his sleep and he was again sitting in the same place as last night singing the same song. And music, (or was it only phantom music ?) the sounds of the minuet subdued by the mist :—

'Tis time to cast thy bow away,
Cupid, we all are in thy sway.

mingled with Ivan's melancholy, drawling song, as, his face turned to the east and the dawn, he sang of the eternal setting, the end of all days :

Hollowed oak trunks, ye will prove
Fit house for us, who on earth did move,
Night approacheth, endeth Day,
And cruel Death his scythe doth lay
To the root of all that live !

CHAPTER III

ON the banks of the Neva, near the Church of Mary the Mother of all the Sorrowing, next to the house belonging to the Tsarevitch Alexis, stood that of Tsaritsa Martha, the widow of Tsar Peter's stepbrother Fedor. Fedor died when Peter was ten years old. The Tsaritsa, eighteen at the time of her wedding, had been married only four weeks. The death of her husband sent her out of her mind and she spent thirty-three years in seclusion. She never left her apartments, and neither knew nor saw anybody. At foreign courts she was believed to be dead long since. Petersburg she had only caught sight of through her windows : its whitewashed huts, built after the Dutch and Prussian manner, its church spires, the Neva with its barges and rafts seemed to her an absurd nightmare. Dreams were her reality.

She imagined herself to be living in the Moscow Kremlin, in the old Terems, and that looking through the window, she would see the high Ivan Tower and the Church of the Annunciation. Yet she never did look out of her window, afraid to dispel her dream, afraid of the daylight. Continual darkness reigned in her apartments ; the windows were draped. She lived by candle-light. The curtains and screens of ancient tradition hid the last Russian Tsaritsa from the people's sight. The solemn, pompous ceremony of a Tsar's Court was strictly observed here. The servants were not allowed to enter further than the hall. Here time stood still, here nothing had changed since the days of the gentle Tsar Alexis. Her crazy mind was possessed of one idea : she believed her husband, the Tsar Fedor, was alive ; that he was now at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem praying for Russia, which was being invaded

by Antichrist, accompanied by countless armies of Poles and pagan foreigners. There is, she thinks, no Tsar in Russia ; he, who calls himself Tsar, not being the true one. He is a pretender, a were-wolf, a Gregory Otriópieff, a runaway artillery man, an alien. But the Lord has not finally forsaken his faithful Orthodox. At the consummation of time, he, Fedor, the only true Tsar of Russia, " the fair sun," will return with a terrible luminous host, and the foreign troops will flee before him as night fleeth ; he will sit with his Tsaritsa on the ancestral throne and re-establish truth and justice. All the people will come and bow before him, and Antichrist, together with all his foreigners, will be overthrown. Soon thereafter will be the second coming of Christ, the end of the world. All this is drawing nigh, is at the door.

About two weeks after the Venus festival in the Summer Garden, Tsarevna Maria invited Alexis to Tsaritsa Martha's house. This was not the first time they had arranged to meet there. The aunt used to supply him with news and letters from his mother, the Tsaritsa Eudoxia, the first wife of Peter, who had been banished to the Sousdal nunnery under the name of Elena.

On entering the house of Tsaritsa Martha, Alexis was obliged to grope his way for some time along dark wood corridors, halls, chambers, ground floors and staircases. There was a smell of wood oil, old mouldering furniture, dust and the rot of age in the air. The house teemed with small cells, chambers, secret rooms, side rooms and closets. They sheltered the old wives and daughters of Boyars, chambermaids, nurses, housekeepers, laundresses, furriers, saintly madmen, mendicants, wanderers, pilgrims, fools and idiots, orphaned girls, old story tellers and musicians, who were skilled to accompany their ancient legends by melancholy string music. Decrepit servants in faded coats, grizzled and shaggy, well nigh moss-grown, caught hold of Alexis' lappets, kissing his hand and his shoulder. Blind, dumb, lame, grey with age, almost featureless, they all followed him, gliding along the walls like phantoms ; they thronged, swarmed, and crept about in the dark passages like woodlice in damp cracks. He met the fool Shamira, who was always pinching and grinning with the fool Polly.

The oldest of the boyars' wives, Soundóuleya Vahrameyevna, the favourite of the Tsaritsa, now in her second childhood, like her mistress, and fat, yellow, trembling like a jelly, fell at his feet ; and for some reason or other began to bewail him, as though he were dead. Alexis felt uncomfortable. He remembered his father saying : " Tsaritsa Martha's house has been transformed by piety into a hospital for the maimed and mad, for hypocrites and rascals."

He sighed with relief on entering the light, airy corner room where his Aunt Marya Alexéyevna was expecting him. The windows looked out upon the blue sunny space of the Neva with its vessels and barges. The walls were bare and the logs of which they were built showed as in a village hut. The sole ornaments were the icons and the lamps which glimmered before them. Wooden seats ran along the walls. His aunt rose from the table at which she was sitting, and tenderly embraced the Tsarevitch. She was dressed after the old fashion in a head-dress and a jerkin of dark, quiet colour with brown spots. Her face was ugly, pale, slightly bloated, like that of an old nun. Yet in the ill-tempered lips, the clever, sharp, piercing eyes, there was something which suggested the Tsarevna Sophia—the evil brood of the Miloslavskis. Like Sophia, she too hated her brother and all he did ; she loved the old times. Peter had spared her ; he called her " old crow," because she was always cawing evil to him.

Maria gave Alexis a letter from his mother. It was an answer to the son's recent note, all too short and laconic : " Mother, farewell ! Please do not forget me in your prayers." Alexis' heart throbbed, as he began to decipher the lines of the familiar writing, scrawled in awkward, childish characters.

" Tsarevitch Alexis, God be with thee ! I, poor woman, am grieved to death, that thou hast forsaken me in my sorrow, forgotten me who bore thee. I tended thee, yet thou hast so soon forgotten me ! But for thee, I should not live in such tribulation and poverty. Sad, very sad, is my life, I would I had never been born. I know not why so much suffering has fallen to my lot. Yet I have not forgotten thee ; but am always praying the Holy Virgin to keep thee pure and well in body and soul. There is an image here

of the Kazan Virgin for which a church has been built. For thy sake I had this image brought to my house, and at night I have myself taken it back, carrying it on my shoulders. And on May 23, I had a vision. The heavenly Queen appeared to me, pure and radiant, and promised to petition her Son, our Lord, to turn my sorrow into joy. And I heard, unworthy though I be, the radiant Virgin speak these words ; ‘Thou hast honoured my image and carried it back to my church, I will exalt thee and protect thy son.’ And thou, my joy, my own child, let the fear of God dwell in thine heart. Write me, darling Aliosha, if only one line to still my sobs ; let me rest from my sorrow, have mercy upon me, thy mother and slave. I pray thee write. I greet thee devoutly.”

When Alexis had finished reading the letter, his aunt gave him presents, sent by his mother—a small image ; a handkerchief which the lowly sister Elena had embroidered with her own hand ; and two small lime-wood cups, for drinking vodka. These humble presents touched him even more than the letter.

“You have quite forgotten her,” said Maria, looking him straight in the face. “You neither write nor send her anything.”

“I dare not write,” replied the Tsarevitch.

“Why not ?” she retorted with vivacity, and her sharp eyes seemed to sting him, “And even if it *did* mean a little suffering, what matter ? It’s for your mother, and no one else.”

He remained silent. Then she began telling him in a low voice all she had learnt from Michael, a half-witted saint, who had come from Sousdal, “Their joy is ever buoyant : visions, signs, prophecies and voices from the images do not cease. Job of Novgorod says : ‘Some ill is awaiting thee in Petersburg. Yet I feel that God will deliver thee ; thou shalt see what will happen.’ It was revealed unto Vissàrion, the old man who lives immured in the Jaroslav wall, that we are on the eve of a change. Either the Tsar will die, or Petersburg fall. And St. Demetrius appeared to the Bishop of Rostov, Dositheus, prophesying that there should be tribulations and that the fulfilment will soon come.

"Soon, soon," concluded Marya, "for many are they who cry: 'Revenge, O Lord! and speed Thy fulfilment.'"

Alexis knew that the fulfilment meant his father's death.

"Remember my words," she cried with prophetic voice. "Not for long will Petersburg exist! it will soon perish." And looking out of the window upon the small white houses among the green marshes, she repeated malignantly: "Sink it! Woe to it! Let it sink back thither whence it came, the devil's bog. Sprung up like a toadstool, it will rot like one. Not even its site will be known, the damned place!"

The old crow was started on her cawing.

"Old woman's tales," said Alexis, waving his hand hopelessly; "we have heard not a few of such prophecies and they have all turned out to be rubbish."

She was going to reply, but glancing at him with her sharp piercing eye, she said: —

"What's the matter with you Tsarevitch? Are you ill? have you been drinking?"

"I am forced to it. The day before yesterday at a formal launching, they carried me out senseless. I would much rather have been a convict in exile or ill in bed than there!"

"You should take medicine or feign illness to escape such launchings? seeing you know your father's ways."

Alexis remained silent, then he sighed heavily: "Ah Marya! Marya! I am much troubled. I hardly know what to do with myself, so troubled am I. No man could stand this without God's help. I would be glad to hide myself somewhere, run away from all this."

"Where can you escape from your father? his arm is long. You will be found out anywhere."

"I am sorry," continued Alexis, "that I did not follow Kikin's advice and go to France or to the Emperor. There my life would be more peaceful, till God wills otherwise. Many in my position have found refuge in flight; only there is no pretext for going away. I really don't know what will become of me, auntie dear; I want nothing, only give me freedom and let me live quietly. Or that they should give me leave to become a monk. I would abdicate the throne, and would live in retirement away from

everything. I would choose some quiet, plain country seat, and there end my days."

"Enough, enough, Alexis! the Tsar is not immortal after all. He too will die in God's good time. They say he suffers from epileptic fits; such people never live long. God will grant the end. I feel sure it won't tarry much longer. Wait, I say—the time of our rejoicing will also come. You are beloved by the people, they drink your health, calling you Russia's Hope. The crown will not pass you by."

"What is the good of it, Marya? I believe it is my fate in any case to be a monk. Nothing awaits me but the cowl, either in my father's life, or later after his death, when they will treat me as they did Basil Shúisky, who was forced to become a monk, and then imprisoned. My life is likely to be a gloomy business."

"How can we help it? One hour's suffering and the issue is a whole life. Be patient, Alexis."

"I have borne it patiently for a long while, I can no more," he burst out, unable to contain himself any longer. His face had grown pale and convulsed. "Would it had an end! This weariness is worse than death; my head seems to be always on the edge of the block. And why all this, O Lord? What have I done to him? Did I not try my very best to please my father? When quite a child I was dragged about on campaigns, half killed with work, made to do sentry duty in the frost, drink vodka till my head swam, I wonder I came out of it alive. I bore it all patiently. I spared neither health nor life. And he never even pitied, not even so much as addressed a kind word to me. He is always angry, and looks as fierce as a beast. It makes no difference what you do for him. If you tore yourself in two, all he would say would be, 'Why not in four?' Well, never mind, put it down to my fault, let it be granted that I disappoint him. Who is responsible for it that I was born such as I am? I am not a fool by nature, and he knows it. Were I a fool, I would have a little better life. But I live according to my own lights, not his. *He cares nothing for the people, I sympathize with the people.* That is the reason why I am in disgrace. 'Do not do the good you would, but the evil I will.' Two men in the world are

like unto God : The Muscovy Tsar and the Pope of Rome—their will is their law. I would not mind if this were all ; in old days he used to scold and beat me, yet it always seemed that he considered me ; that I was not quite a stranger to him. But do you know what he has devised of late ? He neither scolds, nor beats me, not even touches me ; all he does, is to remain silent. I talk to him ; he neither heeds nor sees, but looks past me, as if I did not exist. And this lasts for months, years ! I am no longer a human being in his eyes, but some creature worse than a dog. Now, is this fair ? After all I am his son, his flesh and blood. Even the serpent does not eat its young. He has no fear of God. I know what it is he wants—my death. To me he is not a father, but a monster, a blood-sucker, a torturer. Ay, it would have been better if he had killed me at once. And what does all this mean ? O Lord ! what is he trying to do with me ? What ? ”

He was going to add something, but his voice broke ; all he could do was to falter faintly “ O Lord ! Lord ! ”

He dropped his arms on the table, covered his face and pressed his head between the palms of his hand ; he did not weep, only seemed to sink down, shrink and contract, as from some severe inward pain, and a convulsive tearless sob shook his whole frame.

Tsarevna Marya bent over him ; on his shoulder she laid her small white, firm, powerful hand ; the Tsarevna Sophia had hands just like these.

“ Don’t be fainthearted, Tsarevitch,” said she, with gentle severity in her kind voice. “ Do not murmur against God. Remember Job ! It is good to trust in the Lord, for our life and going forth are in His hand. He can turn evil into good. When God is with me what can men do unto me ? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear, for the Lord will not forsake me ! Trust in Christ, my darling Aliosha ! He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear.”

She stopped ; and he too had grown quiet under the touch of this fond, firm hand, and the sound of these old, familiar pious words.

Somebody knocked at the door. In came Soundóuleya Vahrameyevna sent by the Tsaritsa Martha to fetch them.

Alexis raised his head; his face though very pale was almost calm. He glanced at the image and the faintly glimmering lamp, crossed himself piously, and said:—

“You are right, aunt; God’s will worketh in all things. Moved by the prayers of the Holy Virgin and all the Saints, God will judge between us according to His righteous will. This was, and is, my hope.”

“Amen!” said Marya. They got up and together went into the Tsaritsa Martha’s private apartments.

CHAPTER IV

NOTWITHSTANDING the sunny day, it was quite dark in the room, and the candles were burning. Not a ray could find its way through the windows, blocked up with felt, hung with tapestries. The close air was saturated with calamite, yarrow brandy, rose water, and perfumes added to the fuel for scent. The room was crowded with seats, dressers, cupboards, boxes, hampers, chests, coffers, treasure chests bound with strips of iron, cypress-wood trunks filled with various furs, dresses and linen : " the white treasury." In the middle of the room towered the Tsaritsa's bed, overhung by a canopy, the bed-curtain made of red satin, interwoven with a pale green and gold design, with a quilt of gold embossed tissue, lined with sable and surrounded by a border of ermine. Everything was sumptuous, but old, worn and dilapidated, and looked as though it would crumble into dust at the first breath of fresh air. Through the open door a glimpse of the private chapel could be caught ; it was flooded by the light of lamps, which burned before the images, trimmed with gold and silver, and studded with priceless gems. Here numerous relics were kept : crosses, panagias, triptychs, little boxes, shrines with relics, myrrh, leaven, miracle-working ointments, holy water in waxed cloths, saucers of cassia ; holy chrism in lead vessels, blessed by Patriarchs ; tapers lit with fire from heaven ; sand from the Jordan ; bits of the burning bush, and the oak of Mamre ; some of the Holy Virgin's milk ; an azure stone—part of the sky on which Christ had stood ; a stone in a cloth case " diffusing a perfume, but what sort of stone is unknown." Other treasures were the leg wrappers of Paphnuti Borovsky ; a tooth of Antipas the Great, a charm

against toothache which Ivan the Terrible had appropriated from the reliquary of his murdered son.

Tsaritsa Martha was sitting near the bed, in a gilt arm-chair, which resembled a throne, with a double-crested eagle and crown carved on the back. Although the green glazed stove, richly ornamented with festoons and mouldings, had been well heated, the sickly, shivering old woman wrapped herself in a warm jacket, lined with Arctic fox. A pearl fringe and strings hung over her forehead, from under the golden headgear. Her face was not old, but it seemed lifeless as stone. According to the old custom of Muscovy's Tsaritsas, white and rouge were thickly laid on her face, and made it yet more lifeless. Only the eyes seemed alive; they were transparently lucid, but with a curious blind look resembling that of night birds in daylight.

A monk sat at her feet on the floor relating something to her.

When the Tsarevitch and his aunt came in, the Tsaritsa Martha greeted them kindly, and invited them to listen to this pilgrim of God. He was of small stature, and had a childlike, cheerful face; his voice, too, was cheerful, melodious and pleasant. He was describing his pilgrimages, the settlements of monks on Athos and Solovki; he compared the Russian monastery with the Greek and gave the preference to the Greek.

"The monastery on Mount Athos is called the garden of the Holy Virgin, and the Holy Mother herself is ever beholding it from the heavens, she provides for, and keeps it from destruction. And with her help the settlement flourishes, and brings forth visible and invisible fruit; the visible fruit is fair, the invisible is that of souls saved. And any one, who has once penetrated within the garden, the forecourt of Paradise, and has beheld its nature and beauty, will not, I believe, have any desire to leave it. The air is pure, and the high hills and mountains, the warmth and light of the sun, the variety of trees and fruits, and the nearness of the longed-for land, Jerusalem, maintain a perpetual joy.

"The Solovetzky Isle on the contrary inspires fear and exasperation; it is melancholy, dark, and cold as Tartarus.

“There are features about that island which harm the soul. Sea-gulls, white birds, live there in great numbers ; all the summer long they multiply, breed and build their nests on the ground near the paths, along which the monks go to church. And great is the mischief caused by these birds to the monks. First they lose their tranquillity. Secondly, watching the birds play and flutter and pair, they delight in it, and their passions are aroused. Thirdly, women, maidens, and nuns often visit the monastery.

“Mount Athos is free from any such temptations ; neither seagulls nor women come near it. One woman only floating on the wings of an eagle, the holy Church, soars over that delightful desert, until the fulness of time appointed by the Lord shall be reached ; and to Him be glory for ever and ever—Amen.”

When he had finished, the Tsaritsa begged all to leave the room, even Marya ; and remained alone with Alexis.

She scarcely knew him, and could not remember what relationship existed between them ; even his name she repeatedly forgot, and simply called him grandson. Yet she loved and pitied him with a strange prophetic pity, as if his fate, unknown to himself, were revealed to her.

She looked at him for a long time in silence, with her lucid motionless gaze, which seemed to be dimmed by a film, like the eyes of nightbirds. Then she sadly smiled, and began to gently stroke his face and hair with her hand.

“My poor orphan ! neither father nor mother to protect thee ! The cruel wolves will devour the lamb ; the black crows will peck the white dove to death. I am sorry for thee, my loved one ; thou wilt not live long.”

These wandering words of the last Tsaritsa, who seemed here in Petersburg a pathetic phantom of ancient Muscovy, this decaying splendour, this quiet warm room, where time seemed at a standstill, all filled Alexis' soul with the chill of death, and memories of his fair distant childhood. He felt a sweet melancholy pain gnawing at his heart. He kissed the pale meagre hand, with its thin fingers, from which the ancient, heavy royal rings kept dropping off. She bent her head, as if musing, turning over her coral beads ; beads which ward off evil spirits, for coral grows in the shape of a cross.

"Everything, everything is troubled; times are growing evil!" she again began with increasing alarm. "Have you read, grandson, in the Scriptures: 'Children, these are the last days? Have you heard he is coming and is already in the world'? This has been said about him, the son of Perdition. He is already at the threshold, soon will he come in! I can't tell whether I shall live to see my beloved, my fair sun, the pious Tsar Fedor. Could I but just look at him, if only a glance when he comes in power and glory to wage war with the unfaithful, and having conquered them will sit on the throne of glory, and all the people will bow before him saying: 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

Her eyes brightened up, but in the next moment a dull film seemed to come over them, like ashes over live charcoal.

"Ah! No, I shall not live to see him. I have provoked God's wrath. My heart has a presentiment that trouble is coming. I am sick at heart, grandson. And my dreams have been ill-omened of late."

She furtively glanced round, then bringing her lips to his ear, she whispered.

"Do you know, grandson, what I dreamt quite recently? Whether it was a dream or a vision, I can't tell for certain, but he, he, himself, none other than himself, came to me."

"Who, Tsaritsa?" asked Alexis.

"Don't you understand? Don't you see it? Listen then, grandson, how it was I dreamt that dream. Perhaps you will then understand. It seemed to me, as if I were lying on this very bed, as it were expecting something. Suddenly the door was thrown open, and he appeared. I at once recognized him. Tall, stout, a short foreign coat, in his mouth a pipe; his face clean shaven, with whiskers like a cat. He came up, looked at me and remained silent. I also kept silent, waiting for what would happen next; I felt so sick at heart, so weary—I tried to cross myself; but could not lift my hand; I tried to recite a prayer, my tongue would not move. I lay there, as if dead. He took my hand, and felt it; I shuddered. I glanced at the holy image, the image too seemed to have taken a new shape: it was no longer the blessed Saviour, but an unclean

German, with bloated blue face, like that of a drowned man. And meanwhile I heard him saying to me:—

“‘You are sorely ill, Martha. Would you like me to send you my doctor? Why are you staring at me like this? Do you not recognize me?’ I answered, ‘How could I fail to recognise you? I know you—I have seen many like you.’ ‘Well, if you know me tell me who I am,’ said he. ‘There is no mistaking who you are: a foreigner, a foreigner’s son, a drummer.’ Upon this he grinned and chuckled like a mad tom cat. ‘You are completely gone mad, old woman, that is quite evident. I am neither a foreigner, nor a drummer, but the divinely anointed Tsar of all the Russias, your own dead husband’s, the Tsar Fedor’s, step-brother.’ Now I was roused, I could hardly restrain myself from spitting in his face, and calling: ‘Thou dog! cur’s pup; pretender, Gregory Otriópieff, anathema, this is who thou art!’ But then, ‘it isn’t worth while,’ thought I, ‘why should I rail at him? He is not even worth spitting on. It is but a dream, an evil apparition, which by God’s will, I am now enduring. I’ll just blow with my lips and it will all disappear and disperse.’ ‘And if you are the Tsar,’ said I, ‘What is your name?’

“‘Peter is my name,’ he answered. When I heard the name ‘Peter,’ it was as though a light had flashed upon me. ‘Ah!’ thought I, ‘is this who you are? well, just wait.’ And seeing my tongue would not move, I, not being a fool, began in my mind to recite the holy adjuration.

“‘Satan! thou fiend, get thee away from me, into empty space, thick forests, deep precipices, into bottomless seas, upon prodigious, uninhabited hills, on which the glory of God’s face never shines. Cursed! disappear from me into Tartarus, bottomless hell, the infernal regions of Gehenna. Amen! Amen! Amen! I blow at thee, I spit on thee.’ When I had finished my imprecation, he had disappeared: the earth seemed to have engulfed him, not a trace of him was left, only a smell of tobacco. I awoke, cried out. In hurried Soundóuleya Vahrameyevna, sprinkled me with holy water, burnt some incense; I got up, walked into the chapel, fell down before the holy Queen, only then having remembered and thought it over, I realized who he had been.”

While she was speaking the Tsarevitch gradually realised that it was his father who had been to see her, not in a dream, but in reality. At the same time the maundering of the woman seemed to catch hold of and infect him.

"Well, and who was it, Tsaritsa?" he repeated with a trembling yet eager curiosity.

"Don't you see? Have you forgotten what is said in Ephraim's book, about the second coming, 'there shall come a proud prince of this world, under the name of Simon Peter, who shall be the Antichrist.' Do you hear, his name is Peter? It is he Himself, no doubt."

She fixed on him her eyes dilated with fear, and repeated in a choking whisper: "It is he, himself, Peter! the Antichrist, the Antichrist!"

Book III

THE PRIVATE JOURNAL OF THE TSAREVITCH ALEXIS

CHAPTER I

THE DIARY OF FRÄULEIN ARNHEIM, MAID OF HONOUR

May 1, 1714.

A CURSED country, a cursed people ! Brandy, blood, and dirt ! It is difficult to say which is the ruling characteristic. Dirt, perhaps. The Danish King had good reason to say : " The next time ambassadors from Muscovy come to me, I will have pig-sheds erected for them, for any place they occupy, even a short time, is rendered uninhabitable for at least six months by the stench. A Frenchman describes the Muscovite as a human being according to Plato ; a featherless biped possessing all human qualities except cleanliness and common sense.

And these stinking savages, these baptized bears, more pitiable still when changed into apes of Europeans, consider themselves the only human beings, the rest of mankind beasts. Especially for us Germans they feel an inborn and invincible hatred ; our touch alone defiles them. Lutherans are little better than Satan himself in their eyes. I would not remain another moment in Russia were it not for my duty of loyalty, and devotion to her Highness, my most gracious mistress and dear friend, the Crown Princess Sophia Charlotte. Whatever may happen, I will not forsake her !

I will write this diary in the languages I usually speak, German and French. But some of the jokes, proverbs,

songs, text of ukases and bits of conversation, I will give in Russian and afterwards translate them.

My father, a pure German, belongs to an ancient family of Saxon Knights. My mother was a Pole. With her first husband, a Polish nobleman, she had lived for a long time in Russia, not far from Smolensk, and knew the Russian language well. I was brought up in Torgau, at the court of the Queen of Poland, which was frequented by many Muscovites. I have been familiar with the sound of Russian speech since my childhood. I speak badly ; I don't like the language, but understand it well.

I have decided to keep a diary in order to ease my heart, when it is too heavy : imitating the talker of old, who, not daring to confide his secret to people, whispered it to the marsh-reeds.

I should not like these notes ever to become public, but I rejoice to think that they will one day be read by a man whose opinion I value more than anything else in the world—that of my great teacher, Gottfried Leibnitz.

* * * * *

His letter came just as I was thinking about him. He asks me to find out about the salary which he claims on the strength of his position in the Russian service, as Geheimer Justiz-Rath. I fear he will never see the money. Reading his letter I almost wept for joy and sadness, when I remembered our quiet walks and talks in the galleries of the Salzdallen Castle, along the lime avenues of Herrenhausen, where the gentle breezes among the trees and the murmur of fountains seemed to be ever singing our favourite song from "The Mercure Galant."

*"Chantons, dançons, tout est tranquille
Dans cet agréable séjour.
Ah ! le charmant asile !
N'y parlons que de jeux, de plaisirs et d'amours."*

I remembered the teacher's words which at that time I almost believed : "I am a Slav as you are ; we ought to rejoice that we have Slavonic blood in our veins. A great destiny awaits the race. Russia will link Europe to Asia and reconcile the East and the West. This country is

like a new stewpot which has not yet absorbed any foreign flavour ; a sheet of white paper, whereon you can write anything you like ; virgin soil which will be broken up, and ploughed to receive new seed. Russia might in time even lead Europe, since she may avoid those errors which are too deeply rooted in us." An inspired look lit up his face as he concluded, " I seem called by Providence to be a Russian Solon—the lawgiver of a new world. To gain supremacy over the mind of such a man as the Tsar, and direct it for the good of the people is of more worth than the gaining of a hundred battles."

Alas ! My poor great dreamer ! Could you but know and see all I have learnt and seen in Russia !

Even now as I am writing, sad and stark reality reminds me that I am no longer in the delightful refuge at Herrenhausen, that German Versailles, but in the depth of Muscovite Tartary.

Through the window, screams, shouts, and quarrellings reach me from below ; the servants of our neighbour, Princess Natalia, are fighting ours ; Russians fighting Germans. I see, alas ! the union between Asia and Europe, the East and the West, as it really is.

In ran our secretary, pale and trembling, his dress in tatters, his face bleeding. On seeing him the Crown Princess almost swooned. The Tsarevitch was sent for, but he was suffering from his habitual complaint—drunkenness.

May 2.

We occupy the palace of the Crown Prince Alexis, situated on the banks of the Neva, a whitewashed, two-storied house with a red-tiled roof. The accommodation is so limited that nearly the whole of her Highness's retinue had to be lodged in the neighbouring houses, hired by the Senate for that purpose. One of them had neither doors, windows, stoves, nor furniture of any sort. Her Highness was obliged to finish it at her own expense, and add stables to it.

Yesterday, the proprietor of the house, a certain Gedeónoff, returned ; he is in Tsarevna Natalia's service : he ordered our servants to be turned out, and our things to be thrown into the yard. Then he began to lead her Highness's horses out of the stables and put in his own instead.

The Crown Princess ordered the stables to be taken down so as to remove them to another place. But when the Stallmeister brought the workmen, Gedeónoff sent some of his, who beat ours and chased them away. When the Stallmeister threatened to report this to the Tsar, Gedeónoff answered laughingly : " Report as much as you like ; I will forestall you ! "

But worst of all is the fact that he assures us, he does everything by order of the Tsarevna. This Tsarevna is an old maid, and the vilest tempered creature in the world. She is very amiable to our face, but when our back is turned, every time her Highness's name is mentioned she spits, saying : " The German minx ! what airs she gives herself ! The time will come when she will have to cultivate a little modesty ! "

Thus our grooms are obliged to sleep in the open. So limited is the accommodation in the whole town that the men could not be lodged elsewhere, even for a hundred pieces of gold. When this is mentioned to the Tsar, all he replies is, that in a few years time there will be houses enough. But they won't be needed then, at least not for our people, who, for the most part, will probably have died.

They would not believe in Europe if they knew what poverty is ours. The money for the maintenance of the Crown Princess is paid so irregularly and scantily that it never suffices. At the same time everything is frightfully dear here ; we have to pay for things four times as much as in Germany. We are in debt to all our tradesmen ; they will soon stop supplying us. To say nothing of servants, we ourselves are sometimes short of candles, firewood, even food. Nothing can be got out of the Tsar, he is always busy. The Tsarevitch is always drunk. " The world is full of misery," her Highness said to me to-day, " ever since the age of six I have known no happiness, and no doubt Providence has still greater misfortunes in store for me." With an absent look, as if she already beheld this future, she repeated : " I shall not escape it," and with such calm resignation that I found no words to comfort her and could only silently kiss her hand.

Suddenly a cannon shot was heard. We were obliged to make haste and get ready for a pleasure party on the Neva, a "Water Assembly."

It is the custom here, on hearing the gun signal or seeing the flags hung out at different parts of the town, for all barges, yachts, wherries, boyers, to assemble at the fortress. A fine is imposed for non-appearance.

We set out at once in our boyer with ten oarsmen. Together with other boats we kept rowing for a long time up and down the Neva, always following the Admiral, daring neither to lag behind nor overtake, for fear of being fined. Fines are imposed here for everything.

There was music; a band of trumpets and cornets. The bastions of the fortress re-echoed the sounds of the music.

We were sad as the music was, and the cold, pale blue river with its flat banks, the pale blue sky, transparent as ice, the gleam of the golden pinnacle on the Church of St. Peter and Paul, (built of wood, but painted yellow to suggest marble,) the melancholy chiming of the striking clocks, all intensified our dejection, which was of quite a different nature from anything I had hitherto experienced, except in this city.

And yet the view is pleasing enough. Along the low quay, paved with black tarred piles, runs a line of pale pink brick houses of elaborate design, resembling Dutch churches with pointed turrets, garret windows on the high roofs, and spacious latticed vestibules. You might fancy a real town lay behind them. But next behind them stand poor huts roofed with birch-bark and turf, and, further back, a wilderness inhabited by wolves and deer. On the sea front, windmills just as in Holland. Everything is bright, almost dazzling, and, at the same time, pale and cheerless. It seems to be run up, made iust for the time being. It is a phantom town, a dream.

The Tsar with all his family were in a special boyer; he stood at the rudder and steered. The Tsaritsa and Princesses wore dimity jackets, red skirts, round oil-skin caps, everything after the Dutch fashion—they looked like real sailors' wives from Saardam. "I am inuring my family to the water; those who want to live with me must

not be afraid of water," said Peter. He generally takes them with him; especially in cold weather. He locks them in a cabin and steers the whole time against the wind, until he has well rocked them, and "salvo honore," made them sea sick; then only is he content!

We were afraid lest it might be decided to go to Kronsloot. Those who took part in one such excursion last year (they think of it with terror even to this day), were overtaken by a storm, and narrowly escaped drowning; then they went aground fast on a sand bank, and remained there for several hours up to the waist in water. At last they succeeded in reaching an island, a fire was made, and, quite naked (they had been obliged to take their wet clothes off), wrapped themselves in coarse sledge covers obtained from the peasants, and in this way they spent a whole night, warming themselves at the fire, without drink or food—new Robinson Crusoes.

But this time Providence favoured us; the red standard on the Admiral's boyer was lowered, a sign that the excursion was over.

We returned along the canals, viewing the town. Canals are very numerous here. "God grant me a long life, and Petersburg will become a second Amsterdam!" boasts the Tsar. "Arrange everything as it is done in Holland," these are common words in the Tsar's ukases, in reference to the building of the town. The Tsar has a passion for straight lines, everything that is straight and regular seems beautiful to him. If it were possible he would have had the whole town built according to rule and compass. The inhabitants are urged to build in lines, no building either to exceed or fall short of a fixed line, so that the streets and lanes may all be regular and straight. Houses which go beyond the line are ruthlessly pulled down.

The Tsar's pride is the interminably long, straight Nevsky Prospect, which cuts through the town. The street is still quite waste amid solitary marshes, yet it is already planted with three or four rows of lime-trees, like an avenue. It is kept very clean, being swept every Saturday by captive Swedes.

Many of these geometrical lines of imaginary streets

are almost without houses. Waymarks alone stand there ; others, already built on, bear traces of the plough and furrows of recent cultivation.

Though the houses are erected of brick, according to Vitruvius' directions, yet so hurried and precarious has been the work that they threaten to fall. When a carriage passes they tremble. The swampy soil has no resistance. The Tsar's enemies predict that some time the whole town will be engulfed.

One of our companions, the old Baron Loewenwold, the High Commissioner of Livonia, an amiable and clever man, told us a number of curious incidents about the beginning of the town. In order to raise the first earth rampart of the Peter and Paul fortress, dry earth was needed ; none was to be had anywhere near, all being marsh, mud and moss. Then they devised the plan of carrying the soil for the bastions from distant places in old bast sacks and mats, or even simply in the skirts of their tunics. At this Sisyphean labour two-thirds of the poor wretches perished ; more especially in consequence of the godless peculation and faithlessness of those in whose keeping they were. For months they never saw any bread, which is often difficult to procure even for money in this forlorn place. They lived on cabbage and turnips, suffered from diarrhoea and scurvy, swelled with hunger, froze in their earthen habitats, which resembled the holes of animals, and died like flies. The erection of the fortress on the Pleasure Island (appropriate name !) cost the lives of hundreds of thousands who were driven here by force like cattle from all parts of Russia. In fact this unnatural city, this pleasant "Paradise," as the Tsar called it, is built on human bones ! They pay no ceremonies here either to the living or the dead. I myself have seen in various parts of the town the body of a workman wrapped in a mat, carried on a pole by men, or, bare as it was, simply laid on a sledge and taken to the cemetery, where it was buried without any rite. Such a number of the poor folk die here daily that there is no time to give them all Christian burial.

One hot summer day, rowing on the Neva, we noticed grey patches on the azure surface ; they turned out to be masses of dead midges—which abound in the neighbouring

marshes. These came from Lake Ladoga. One of the oarsmen scooped up a hatful of them.

While listening to Loewenwold's tales about the building of Petersburg I closed my eyes, and before me rose a vision of countless human bodies, very grey and small, like these masses of dead midges floating on the Neva, a mass without beginning or end, of persons whom nobody knows and nobody remembers.

On my return home I sat down to write this diary in my small room, a veritable bird's cage, in the attic, just below the roof.

It felt close, I opened the window, in rushed the smell of spring, also of tar and pine shavings. On the banks of the Neva two carpenters, a young man and an old one, were repairing a boat. Nothing but the hammering was heard, and the monotonous melancholy song which the younger man was singing over and over again. Here are the few words I was able to catch :

In the town Saint Petersburg
On the river Neva,
On the glorious Basil Isle,
A sailor rigged his ship, O !

Gazing up towards the evening sky, pale green, transparent and cold as ice, I listened to this melancholy song, so like a wail, and myself was moved almost to tears.

May 3.

To-day her Highness went to see the Tsaritsa ; she complained about Gedeónoff, and also asked for a more regular payment of the money. I was present at the interview.

The Tsaritsa was amiable as usual.

"Czaarische Majestät Euch sehr lieb," she said to the Crown Princess in her broken German, during the conversation.

"Believe me, his Majesty is very fond of you. 'Truly Catherine,' said he, 'your daughter-in-law is exceedingly pleasing both in appearance and temperament.' 'Your Majesty,' said I, 'you love your daughter more than me.' 'No,' he answered and laughed, 'not more, but very soon I will love her as much. My son,' said he, 'is really not worthy of so good a wife.'"

We concluded from these words that the Tsar was not over fond of his son.

When her Highness almost tearfully interceded for her husband, the Tsaritsa promised to be his advocate, always with the same amiability, assuring her that she loved her as her own child, and had she carried her under her heart, she could not have loved her better.

I don't like this Russian sentimentality : it is honey on the knife's point.

Yet it appears that her Highness does not deceive herself ; she once said in my presence that the Tsaritsa was worse than the rest : "pire que tout le reste."

To-day, coming home from the interview, she remarked, "she will never forgive me if I bear a son."

One day when our conversation had turned on the Tsaritsa, an old peasant woman whispered into my ear, "She has no business to reign ; she was neither born to it, nor is she a Russian. And we know how she was taken prisoner, brought into the camp with only a chemise on, and given into custody. The man on duty, our officer, gave her a coat. The Lord alone knows of what rank she is ; they say she used to wash shirts in Finland."

I could not help remembering this to-day when her Highness, in greeting the Tsaritsa, was going to stoop and kiss her dress, according to court etiquette. It is true the Tsaritsa did not allow it to come to that, but herself embraced and kissed her. Yet, what an irony of fate, that a Princess of Wolfenbüttel, heiress of the great Guelphs, who contested the German Imperial Crown in days when the houses of Hohenzollern and Hapsburg had never yet been heard of, should kiss the dress of this woman who once was a laundress !

May 4.

After warm sunny days it has suddenly turned wintry again, with cold wind, wet, snow and rain. Ice from the Ládoga is floating down the Neva. We are told, however, that snow falls here even as late as June.

Our palace has been so neglected that even its roof has proved unsound ; to-night, during a severe rainfall, water came through the ceiling in her Highness's bedchamber ; a

good thing it did not come on the bed ; but there was a pool on the floor.

The ceiling is decorated with a painted allegory ; a burning altar entwined with roses ; on both sides Cupids bearing two coats of arms ; the Russian Eagle and the Brunswick Steed. Between them, two clasped hands and the inscription, " Non unquam junxit nobiliora fides." " Never did fidelity join two nobler beings." The damp has formed a black spot just over the altar, and cold dirty water kept dripping from Hymen's flame.

I remembered the wedding speech made by the archeologist Eckhardt, in which he tried to prove that both bride and bridegroom descended from the Byzantine Emperor, Constantine Porphyrogenitus. A fine country, where rain falls on the nuptial couch of the descendant of the Porphyro-gene !

May 5.

At last the Crown Prince has appeared. He lives in the other half of the house, quite separate from us, and often weeks pass by without our ever seeing him. The pair have had a 'scene.' I heard it all from the adjacent room where her Highness had expressly wished me to remain.

To all her prayers and complaints in regard to the Gedeónoff affair and the keeping back of money, he answered, shrugging his shoulders

" Mich nichts angehn. Bekümmere mich nicht an Sie. This matter is no business of mine. I do not trouble myself about your money affairs."

Then he burst out reproaching her for complaining to his father about him.

" Are you not ashamed of yourself ? " sobbed her Highness. " Spare at least your own honour ! In Germany you would not find a cobbler or tailor, who would allow himself thus to treat his wife."

" You are no longer in Germany but in Russia."

" I am only too well aware of this. Yet if only everything were carried out that was promised."

" Who promised ? "

" Did not you with the Tsar sign the marriage contract ? "

" Halten Maul ! Ich habe sie nichts versprochen. Hold

your tongue ! I promised you nothing. You very well know that you were forced upon me ! ”

He jumped up; the chair he had sat on fell to the ground.

I almost rushed to her rescue, I was afraid he would strike her. I hated him to such an extent at that moment, that I believe I could have killed him.

“ Das danke ihnen der Henker ! May the headsman reward you for this ! ” exclaimed the Crown Princess, beside herself with anger and sorrow.

Swearing at her in an odious manner, he left the room, slamming the door.

It seems all that is wild and base in this country is incarnate in this man. Only one thing I find hard to decide. Which is he, a fool or a scoundrel ?

Poor Charlotte ! Her Highness, who daily shows me greater friendship, quite beyond my deserts, has herself desired that I should so call her. Poor Charlotte, when I came to her, she threw herself into my arms, and remained silent for a long while, trembling all over. At last she said sobbing :

“ If only I were not with child and could, without hindrance return to Germany, I would gladly agree to live there on dry bread and water. I am well nigh losing my reason. I pray God to give me strength, so that I may not be tempted to do something desperate ! ”

And after awhile she gently added, weeping in her wonted submissiveness, which frightens me more than all her despair :—

“ I am the unhappy victim of my family. They have profited nothing from my sacrifice, while I myself am slowly dying of grief.”

* * *

We were both crying when they came to tell us it was time to go to the masquerade. Suppressing our tears we began to dress. Such is the custom here : willy nilly, be merry thou must.

The masquerade took place in the open air in the Troitsky Square, near the “ hôtellerie.” The square is very low, marshy, and covered with mud, which never dries ; part of it had been covered with beams, and wooden planks on the top of these. On the platform thus formed the masque-

radars crowded. Happily the weather had again suddenly changed; it was a calm, warm evening. But towards night a thick mist, white as milk, rose from the river and enveloped the square. Many, and especially those ladies who had on extremely thin costumes, were catching cold from the damp, and began to sneeze and cough. Instead of medicine they were given brandy; grenadiers as usual carried it round in buckets. In the white shroud of mist, illumined by the greenish light of the slowly fading twilight—later on in July twilight lasts the whole night through—all these masqueraders, harlequins, pagliazzi, shepherdesses, nymphs, Chinese, Arabs, bears, cranes, and dragons, seemed grotesque and terrible phantoms.

Here also, close to the platform on which we were dancing, black posts with iron points were visible, and on them remained the almost putrefied heads of decapitated criminals. The stench from these heads mingled with the resinous perfume of young pine shoots and birch buds, which now fills the city, And again it seemed, as it always does in this place, all was but a mirage!

May 6.

An unexpected reconciliation! When I approached the half open door, leading to her Highness's apartment, I saw by chance in the mirror that she was sitting in an armchair, while the Crown Prince, stooping over her and holding her head with both his hands, was kissing her upon the brow with deferential tenderness. I was going to retire, but she too caught sight of me in the mirror and signed to me with her hand. I understood that she wished me to stay, as I did last time, in the next room. The poor girl probably wanted to parade her happiness.

“Der Mensch, der sagen, ich sie nicht lieb habe, lügt wie Teufel!” ‘He who says, I don't love you lies like the devil!’ said the Tsarevitch; I divined that they were talking of one of those slanders about her Highness, which circulate here so freely, (she is even accused of unfaithfulness to her husband). “I believe in you, I know you are good; and those who speak evil about you are not worth your little finger.”

He enquired after her affairs, her troubles, her health, her condition, with such sympathy, and his words and

features were so full of intelligence and kindness that he seemed to me quite another being. I could scarcely believe my eyes and ears, remembering what had passed in the same room only yesterday.

When he left and we were alone, Charlotte said to me :
 "What a strange man he is, not in the least what he seems. Nobody knows him. How he loves me ! Ah, my dear Juliana, give me love, and all will be well, I can endure everything ! And when a child will be born unto me, I pray God it may be a son, I shall be quite happy !"

I did not answer ; I had not the courage to undeceive her ; she was already so happy, but for how long ? poor, poor woman !

* * *

Perhaps I am unfair to the Tsarevitch ? May be, he is really different from what he seems.

He is the most reserved of men. When he is not drunk, he sits buried among his old books : he is supposed to be studying Universal History, and Theology, not only Russian, but also the Catholic and Protestant ; he is said to have read through the German Bible eight times : or else he holds converse with monks, pilgrims, friars, and people of the lowest class.

One of his servants, a certain Fedor Yevarlakóff, an intelligent young fellow, a great lover of literature—he borrows from me various books, even Latin ones—told me one day something concerning the Crown Prince, which I at once set down in my note book, a gift from dear Leibnitz, which I always carry with me.

"The Tsarevitch is warmly attached to the priests and the priests to him. He reveres them like God, and they call him a saint ; they always beatify him to the people."

I remember Leibnitz telling me, that on being introduced to him in the summer of 1711, at the ducal castle of Wolfenbüttel, he had a long conversation with the Tsarevitch on his favourite subject : the union of the East with the West, China and Russia with Europe, and that later on he had sent him, through his tutor Baron Huissen, an abstract of the letters about Chinese affairs, Leibnitz asserted that, contrary to all rumours spread about the Tsarevitch, he is very clever, only his intelligence is of a different kind to his

father's. "He probably takes after his grandfather," remarked Leibnitz.

Her Highness had shown me a copy of the letter received by the Duke Ludwig Rudolf of Wolfenbüttel, her father, from the Berlin Royal Academy of Science. This letter mentions the possibility of spreading real Christian enlightenment throughout Russia in the near future, thanks to the special and marked inclination of the Crown Prince to all science and books.

I have also seen the report of meetings held by the same Academy, in 1711, when one of its members, the Co-Rector Frish, had declared: "The Tsar's heir loves the sciences even more than the Tsar himself, and in his time he will patronise them no less."

It seems strange! But I was looking at them both to-day in the mirror, as it were the mysterious mirror of fate, I seemed to distinguish in both faces, so unlike in appearance, one common trait—the shadow of some impending grief, as if they were victims, and great suffering were in store for them both. Or was this only fancy roused by that dark mirror?

May 8.

To-day we were present at the launching of a large seventy-gun man-of-war. The Tsar, dressed as a common shipwright, in a red knitted jerkin daubed with tar, axe in hand, was clambering about the hull-props, seeing that all was in order, and paying no heed to danger:—only lately two men were killed at a launching. I remembered the Tsar's words: "I toil like Noah at the Ark of Russia!" Taking his hat off before the chief Admiral, like a subordinate to his chief, he asked whether it was time to begin, and having received the order, he was the first to strike with his axe. A hundred more axes began to cut the props, at the same time the beams were drawn back which had supported the vessel on both sides in the stays. She glided along the greased cradle foot, first slowly, then like a dart, smashing the cradle foot into shivers, and floated out on the water, rolling and cutting the waves for the first time to the sound of music, cannon salutes, and shouting of the people.

A small boat took us to the new vessel. The Tsar was on board already; he had changed into the uniform of a naval

officer, and decorated with a star and the pale blue ribbon of St. Andrew, he received the guests. All standing on the deck, "the newly born" ship was baptized with a first cup of wine. The Tsar made a speech. Here are some stray words I have remembered:—

"Our people resemble children, who never will learn their A B C unless they are made to; they grumble at the time, but once having mastered it, they are grateful. The occurrences of to-day prove this. Has not everything been done under compulsion? And yet words of gratitude are already heard for those undertakings which have borne fruit. If you disdain the bitter, neither shall you enjoy the sweet!"

Standing behind me, I overheard one of the fools, an old boyar, who was probably drunk, whisper to his neighbour, "We would rather not have your blessings when they have to be purchased by so many aches and pains."

"We have," continued the Tsar, "the precedents of the civilised nations in Europe, who also began in a small way. It is time for us also to make a start, first in little things, and later will come men who will not recoil before the greater tasks. I know I shall neither do it, nor see it done, for the number of our days is but short, yet will I make a beginning, then those who come after me will find it easier. As for us, we must content ourselves with the glory of having begun!"

I admired the Tsar, he looked so noble. We went down into the cabins, the ladies sat apart from the men in an adjacent saloon, where, during the banquet, no man except the Tsar was allowed to enter. There was a small round window, hung with red damask, in the partition between the two saloons. I sat next to it; raising the curtain a little I could see and partly hear what went on in the men's apartment. Some of the things I have put down in my note book.

Long narrow tables, arranged in the shape of a horse shoe, were laden with cold dishes; pickles and fumados, anything that would create intense thirst. The food is coarse, the wines are good. For the furnishing of these banquets the Tsar allows the Admiralty from his private purse one thousand roubles, a vast sum for this country. The guests sat down anyhow, without any distinction of

rank, common seamen next to the highest dignitaries. At one of the tables presided the Kniaz-Pope, the mock Prince-pope, surrounded by his cardinals. He solemnly pronounced "Grace and peace be unto you, noble assembly! In the name of Bacchus, and Ivaska Khmelnitsky, and the Spirit of wine. The drunkenness of Bacchus be with you!"

"Amen," responded the Tsar, who fills the position of Archdeacon to the Pope.

All guests approached in their turn his Holiness, bowed low before him, kissed his hand, and accepting a ladle of pepper-brandy drank it; this is pure spirit of wine—*spiritus vini*—poured over red Indian pepper. I should have thought that the mere threat of this brandy would be sufficient to extract confessions from the most hardened malefactor,—here they compel even ladies to drink it.

The health of all the members of the royal household was proposed; only the Tsarevitch and his wife were omitted, although they were present. Every toast was accompanied by the firing of cannon, and the shock of the firing was so great that the glass in one of the windows cracked.

The guests grew speedily intoxicated, especially as brandy was being secretly added to the wine. The air became close in the low cabins, crowded with people. The guests threw off their waistcoats, and pulled off one another's wigs. Some huddled together and kissed one another, others quarrelled, especially the ministers and senators, who accused one another of bribe-taking, cheating and swindling.

"Your mistress costs you twice your salary!" screamed one.

"Have you forgotten the pickled cibarins?" retorted the other.

Cibarins were pieces of gold, which a cunning petitioner had offered in a small barrel under the guise of mushrooms.

"And how much hemp supplied to the Admiralty did you take off at a gulp, eh?"

"Ah, friends, what is the use of blaming one another? everybody longs for what is good; whether honourable or swindlers, all men are sinners."

"Bribes are mere accidents!"

"To accept nothing from the petitioners is against nature."

"Yet by law——"

"What is law but a carriage pole? you can swing it whichever way you like——"

The Tsar listened attentively. It is his custom, when all are drunk, to double the guards and let no one pass out of the door. At the same time, the Tsar, who is never drunk, much as he may take, tries purposely to provoke quarrels among them. He then learns what he could never have known otherwise. There is a proverb to this effect—"When rogues fall out honest men come by their own."

The banquet develops into a public inquiry into character.

The Most Serene Prince Ménshikoff quarrelled with the Vice-Chancellor Shafiroff; the Prince had called the latter a Jew.

"I am a Jew, but you are a pieman," retorted Shafiroff, "Your father had not even a spoon to eat his soup with. You have been dragged up, 'taken from the mire you have been made a sire'—"

"You dirty Jew, I'll crack you on my nail like a flea, and nothing but a little moisture will remain."

They went on railing at one another for a long time. Russians are as a rule very versatile in ribaldry; I think it is impossible to hear more obscene language anywhere else; the air is full of it. In one of the vilest expressions used by young and old, the term mother is coupled with the most obscene of terms: it is known as the 'mother-word.'

Having exhausted their resources of abuse, the dignitaries began to spit into one another's faces, while the guests stood round looking on and laughing. Here such scuffles are quite common, and involve no further consequences.

Prince James Dolgoruki had a tussle with the Prince Caesar Romadanófski. These two venerable old men, both white with age, abused one another in most insulting terms, then tore one another's hair, and began strangling and beating one another with their fists. When some of the onlookers tried to separate them, they drew out their swords.

"Ei! dat ist nitt permittet," exclaimed the Tsar in Dutch, coming up and standing between them.

The Archdeacon Peter Mihailoff is commanded by the Pope "to pacify the guests by word and act during the uproar."

"I want satisfaction!" moaned Prince James, "I have been sorely affronted." "Comrade," remonstrated the Tsar, "Where can you seek judgment against Caesar but from God? I myself am but a subject, and belong to his Majesty's service. What is the affront after all? None of the assembly has remained untouched by Bacchus. Sauffen-rauffen, we drink, fight, sleep, and make friends."

For punishment each of them was made to drink another bumper of pepper-brandy. Soon they both were rolling under the table.

Buffoons were shouting, grinning, spitting, not only at one another but also at decent people. A special chorus, called the Spring chorus, imitated the singing of all birds from the nightingale to the warbler, in such piercing, shrill notes that the walls resounded with a deafening noise. A wild dance-song was heard; its words almost meaningless recalled the screams of a witches' sabbath—

Shinshan!
Shevergen!
Beat the pace, beat!
Don't spare your feet!

In our ladies' apartment the old drunken fool, the Princess Abbess Rjévskaia, a veritable witch, whirled away in a dance, lifting her skirts above her head and singing in a voice hoarse with drink:—

Tune up! tune up! my music sweet
Work on, work on my staff,
My father-in-law from the stove
Has fallen into a trough!
Had I but known this would occur
I would have placed him at the top,
And falling, he'd have broken his head. . . .

The Tsaritsa, with her hair in disorder, covered with sweat, red and flown with wine, was watching her, and beat the time with her hands and foot, and laughed like mad. At the beginning of the orgie she tried to persuade her Highness to drink, using some curious sayings, which appear to be numerous on the subject in Russian. "Bumper on bumper is better than stroke upon stroke! "Even cabbages flag

without water!" "Even a hen must drink!" Yet, noticing that the Crown Princess was almost fainting, she left off, and even secretly added water to her wine and ours at the same time. To water wine is counted a great crime at such banquets.

Towards the end of the night—we had remained at table from six in the evening till four in the morning—the Tsaritasa several times went to the door and beckoned to the Tsar, saying:

"Isn't it time to go home?"

"Never mind, Katinka, to-morrow is a holiday," answered the Tsar.

Each time I lifted the curtain I saw something new in the men's apartment.

Somebody walking across the table had stepped with his boot into a dish of fish brawn. The Tsar had only a moment before forced some of this fish down the Chancellor Golóvkin's throat. Golóvkin could not bear fish; servants held his arms and legs; he struggled, choked, and grew very red. Having done with Golóvkin, the Tsar turned to the Hanoverian Resident, Weber; he fondled and kissed him, with one hand he supported his head, with the other he held a bumper to his lips, begging him to drink it. Then taking off his wig, he kissed now the front, now the back of his head. He lifted his lips and kissed his teeth. They say the reason of this tenderness was the Tsar's desire to get out of the Resident a diplomatic secret, Moussin Pushkin, who was being tickled below the neck, squealed like a young pig brought to the knife. He is very ticklish. The Tsar is trying to accustom him to it.

The great Admiral Apraksin burst into a flood of tears. The privy councillor Tolstoi crept about on all fours; it turned out afterwards that he was not so drunk as he pretended; he did it to escape more drink. A bottle had cut open the Vice Admiral Cruis' head. Prince Ménchikoff had fallen to the ground; he seemed comatose; his face had grown livid. People busied themselves round him and tried by rubbing to revive him, lest he should die—death is not an unusual ending to such orgies. The Tsar's chaplain, the Archimandrite Theodosius, was sick; "I shall die, holy Mother!" he piteously moaned. The Kniaz-Pope

was snoring ; his head lay on the table in a pool of wine.

Hissing, roaring, the noise of breaking china, bad language, boxes on the ear, which no longer called forth any attention, seemed to fill the air. A stench prevailed as in the vilest tavern. Had anyone come down from the outside he could not have helped vomiting.

My head swam. I seemed at times to lose consciousness. The human faces all looked beastlike ; the Tsar's the most terrible of all. Large and round, with staring eyes, slightly oblong and prominent, with pointed moustaches standing out, it was the face of a tiger or a huge wild cat. Calm and disdainful, his look was clear and piercing. He alone had remained sober ; and was now with curiosity peering into the vilest mysteries, into the bared soul of human beings, which lay turned inside out before him in this inquisition chamber, where the instrument of torture was wine.

The Kniaz-Pope was roused and lifted from the table. The Kniaz-Caesar had also had time to sleep off his worst. They were made to dance together ; incapable of standing on their feet they had to be propped up on both sides. The pope wore a mock tiara crowned by a nude Bacchus, in his hands he held a cross made of pipes. The Caesar, wearing a mock crown, held a sceptre in his hand. The Tsarevitch lay on the ground dead drunk, between these two fools, these phantoms of ancient dignity—the Russian Tsar and the Russian Patriarch. What happened next I don't remember, and will not even try to recall, it was too disgusting.

On the neighbouring ships reveille was sounded. On ours too the roll of the drum was heard. The Tsar himself, who is an excellent drummer, was sounding retreat. This signified that a great battle had been waged with Bacchus, and he had remained victor. Grenadiers were bearing away drunken nobles, like bodies from a battle field.

When we saw the sky at last, it seemed to us we had escaped—to be grandiose—from hell ; speaking vulgarly—from a cesspool.

May 9

To-day the Tsar left Petersburg with a large fleet, he has gone to meet the Swedes.

May 20.

It is a long time since I wrote in this diary. Her Highness has been ill after the entertainment. I have not left her. And besides there is nothing worth writing about. Everything is so sad, that one feels inclined neither to talk nor think; let come what will!

May 25.

I was not far wrong, the truce did not last long. Again a black cloud has come between the Tsarevitch and her Highness. Again they do not meet for whole weeks. He too is ill. The doctors say it is consumption; I think it is brandy.

June 4.

The Tsarevitch came in dressed for a journey in a German travelling coat; he talked about things in general, and all at once said:

“Adieu, ich gehe nach Karlsbad.”

The Crown Princess was so taken aback that she could say nothing. She did not even ask for how long. I thought he was joking, but afterwards it appeared that almost immediately on leaving us, he had taken his seat in the coach and was gone. It is said he has really gone to Karlsbad for a cure.

And now we are left alone without Tsar or Tsarevitch. Her Highness does not receive any letters from her parents; they probably believe the slanders circulated about her and are displeased with her. We are forsaken by all.

July 7.

A letter from the Tsar to her Highness. “I do not wish to trouble you, nor act against my conscience, but the absence of your husband, my son, compels me to do so, in order to prevent the idle talk of loose tongues, which are wont to convert truth into lies. The fact of your pregnancy has been spread abroad; and therefore a certain arrangement must be made for the time when by God’s will you will be delivered. The Chancellor Golovkin will acquaint you with the details of what you will be expected to conform to, and then the mouths of all slanderers will be closed.”

The arrangement was made. Her Highness was surrounded by three women: the Vice Chancellor’s wife,

General Bruce's wife, and the old fool Rjévskaya, the same who danced at the banquet. Her Highness was only slightly acquainted with them. These three shrews are continuously about her, ostensibly to take care of her, really to act as simple spies.

And what does all this mean ? what are they frightened at ? what deception is possible ? surely not an exchange ; a boy for a girl, by those who would like to see the inheritance assured to the offspring of the Tsarevitch. Or is it only an excess of amenity on the Tsaritsa's part ?

Only now we realize how much we are hated and suspected. Charlotte's whole crime consists in being her husband's wife. The father is against his son, and we stand between them as between two fires.

"I will obediently submit to your Majesty's wish with regard to the appointment of these three women for my protection," Charlotte replied, to the Tsar, "all the more as the thought of deceiving you or the Crown Prince had never entered my head. I am hurt by this strange and unmerited treatment. I thought the love and clemency so often promised me by your Majesty were sufficient safeguard against slander, and a warrant that the guilty ones should meet with due punishment. It is grievous that my enemies should be strong enough to incite such intrigues. God is my only refuge in this foreign land, and when abandoned by everybody else, He will hearken unto the sighs of my heart and put an end to my sufferings."

July 12.

This morning at 7 o'clock her Highness was successfully delivered of a daughter. No news whatever from the Tsarevitch.

August 1.

The news of a Russian victory over the Swedes on July 27, has arrived ; it is said an entire squadron under the command of Ehrenshild has been captured. The whole day long the bells are ringing and cannon firing. It is true they are not economical of their powder here ; the most insignificant victory, the taking of three or four rotten galleys is sufficient excuse for firing off cannon, and at such a rate as though the world had been conquered.

September 9.

The Tsar has returned to Petersburg. Again a cannonade as though it were a besieged city. We are almost deaf. Endless triumphal processions, fireworks with boastful allegories : the Tsar is glorified as if he were a conqueror of worlds, a Caesar or an Alexander. Again an orgie ; we thanked the Lord we were spared this time. Again, it is said, they drank like swine. Rain and mud. A low, dark and, as it were, impenetrable sky looks in through the windows. Wet crows perch cawing on the bare branches. Dreariness ! Dreariness !

September 19.

I found the Crown Princess weeping over old letters the Tsarevitch had written her during their engagement. Crooked, broken characters on pencil lines, empty compliments, diplomatic amiabilities. And she, poor thing, shed tears in looking over them !

We learnt by chance that the Tsarevitch lives incognito in Karlsbad and will not return here before the winter.

September 20.

In order to forget myself, and not to think about our affairs, I have decided to write down everything I see or hear about the Tsar. Leibnitz is right—"quanto magis hujus Principis indolem prospicio tanto eam magis admiror"—The longer I watch this sovereign's character the more I marvel at it.

*PETER**October 1.*

I have seen the Tsar forge iron in the dock-yard smithy. The courtiers ministered to him, made the fire up, blew the bellows, carried the coal, soiling the silk and velvet of their gold-embroidered coats thereby.

"That's right ; that is as a Tsar ought to be ! He does not eat his bread unearned. He works better than a 'burlak,' " said one of the bystanders, a common working man.

The Tsar was wearing a leather apron ; his hair was tied up with a string ; his sleeves were turned up and showed his bare sinewy arms ; his face was smeared with soot. The tall smith, lit up by the red blaze of the furnace, resembled a Titan. His hammer hit the white, hot iron so hard that

the sparks showered around, the anvil trembled and rang as if on the point of being smashed into shivers.

I remembered the words spoken by an old boyar :

“Sovereign, thou would'st forge a new Russia out of Vulcan's iron. Hard work for the hammer ! hard, too, for the anvil !”

“Time, too, is like hot iron ; forge it at white heat !”

So runs one of the Tsar's sayings. And he indeed forges Russia at white heat. He never rests ; he is always hurrying somewhither. It seems as though he could not stop to rest even if he would. He is killing himself with feverish activity, an incredible tension of strenuousness, a ceaseless convulsiveness. The doctors say that his strength is undermined ; that he won't live long. He is always taking the Olonetz iron waters, yet at the same time he drinks brandy ; thus the remedy does more harm than good.

The first impression he leaves on the observer is rapidity. He is all motion ; does not walk, but runs. The Imperial Ambassador, Count Kinski—a pretty solid man—assures us that he would rather take part in battles, than have a two hours' audience with the Tsar, because he is forced, in spite of his stoutness, to run after him all the time, so that he is bathed in sweat even in the severest Russian frost. “Time is like life,” repeats the Tsar. “Loss of time is death.”

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Fire and water are his elements, he loves them like one born in them.—water like a fish, fire like a salamander. He has a passion for cannonades, and for various experiments with fire and fireworks. He always lights the fireworks himself, rushing into the flames ; I was present once when he singed his hair. He says he is inuring his people to the smell of powder ; but this is only an excuse, fire itself he simply loves.

His passion is as great for water. Although the offspring of Muscovy's Tsars who never saw the sea, he yet began longing for it, when, but a child, he was secluded in the close terems of the Kremlin Palace, like a wild gosling in a hen-house.

He used to float in toy boats on artificial lakes. When he last he got to the sea he could not tear himself away from

it again. He spends most of his time on water, he sleeps every day after dinner on his frigate ; when ill he lives on board altogether, and sea-air generally cures him. During the summer he feels the lack of air, even among the large gardens of Peterhof, so he fitted himself up a bedroom in Monplaisir, a small house, washed by the Finnish Gulf ; the windows of the bedroom look straight upon the sea. In Petersburg the Observatory is built on a sandbank in the mouth of the Neva. In the Summer Garden, also, the Palace is surrounded on two sides by water. Steps lead from the door straight down into the water, just as in Amsterdam and Venice. Once, during winter, when the Neva had already put on her ice-chains, and only before the Palace there remained a round, open ice-free space, about a hundred yards in circumference, he sailed on it up and down in a tiny boat, like a duck in a pool. When the whole river was covered with hard ice he ordered a space, about a hundred yards long and thirty yards wide, to be daily cleared and swept of the snow : I myself have seen him sliding along this surface in small pretty boyers, fitted with steel skates and bulge-ways. "We sail on the ice," said he, "so as not to forget our nautical exercises during the winter." Another time, at Moscow, in the Christmas holidays, he went along the streets in a huge sleigh—rigged in imitation of a real sailing vessel. He loves letting young geese and ducks, which the Tsaritsa gives him, go into the water. He delights in their glee as though he himself were a water bird.

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He says his first thoughts about the sea date from his reading the narrative of the maritime expedition of Prince Oleg of Kieff to Constantinople, recorded by the Chronicler Nestor. If this be true he is only resuscitating the old in the new, the native in the foreign. From the sea, across the land to the sea—this is Russia's course !

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Sometimes it seems to me that the contradictions of his two beloved elements, water and fire, have merged in him into one being, strange and curious. I know not whether kind or cruel, divine or diabolic—but certainly inhuman.

A strange timidity occasionally besets him. I myself have seen him at a pompous reception of Ambassadors sitting on the throne, confused, blushing, perspiring, trying to gain courage by repeatedly taking snuff ; he did not know what to do with his eyes, and even avoided his wife's glances. When the ceremony was over and he was no longer obliged to stay on the throne, he was as merry as a school-boy. The Markgravine of Brandenburg told me that at her first interview with the Tsar—who it is true was quite young at that time—he turned away, covered his face with his hands like a shy debutante, and did nothing but repeat, "*Je ne sais pas m'exprimer*"—"I cannot talk." He soon recovered, however, and became almost too free. He expressed the desire to convince himself that the German ladies' hard waists, which so surprised the Russians, were not caused by their bony nature, but by the whalebones in the stays. "*Il pourrait être plus poli*"—"He might have been a little more polite," observed the Markgravine. Baron Manteuffel related to me the Tsar's interview with the Queen of Prussia : "He was so amiable that before offering her his hand he put on a rather dirty glove. At the supper he surpassed himself. He neither picked his teeth, nor belched, nor uttered any other unbecoming noises (*il n'a ni roté ni pété*)."

When travelling about Europe he insisted that nobody should look at him, and that the roads and streets he had to pass should be quite empty. He entered houses and went out of them by secret ways ; visiting museums by night. One day, in Holland, when he was obliged to pass through a hall where the members of the States-General were sitting, he asked the president to make the whole assembly turn their backs to him as he passed ; and when respect for the Tsar would not allow them to do so, he pulled his wig down to his nose, hurried through the room and antechamber, and ran down the stair.

One day, rowing on the canal at Amsterdam, and noticing a boat with inquisitive spectators attempting to approach him, he fell into such a fury that he flung two empty bottles at the steersman's head, and nearly brained him. A real savage ! A Russian demon in a civilized Europe ! A savage and a child ! All Russians in general are children.

The Tsar only pretends to be grown up when among them. I shall never forget how, at the village fair near Wolfenbüttel, the hero of Poltava rode on the wooden horses of a second-rate roundabout, tried to catch brass hoops on a stick, and enjoyed himself like a small schoolboy. Children are cruel. The Tsar's favourite diversion is to force people into doing something for which they have an instinctive aversion. Those who cannot stand wine, butter, cheese, oysters, or vinegar, are on every possible occasion stuffed with them by the Tsar. Those who are ticklish are tickled by him. Many, to please him, pretend that they are unable to endure what he specially delights in administering. Sometimes these jokes are fearful, especially during the festivities in the Christmas holidays, the so-called Slavleniya. This amusement, an old boyar told me, is so terrible, that many prepare for it as for death. People are dragged by ropes from one ice hole to another ; others are compelled to sit on the ice bare-buttocked ; others again are killed by excessive drink. This is the way a creature alien to man, a faun or a centaur would play with men, maiming them and killing them unawares.

In the anatomical theatre at Leyden he was one day watching how the exposed muscles of a body were being saturated with turpentine. Noticing a look of extreme repulsion on the face of one of his Russian companions, the Tsar took him by the collar, bent him over the table, and insisted on his tearing the muscles off the body with his teeth. At times it is almost impossible to say where childish frolic ends and the cruelty of a beast begins.

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Coupled with strange awkwardness and timidity he displays savage shamelessness, especially towards women. " Il faut que Sa Majesté ait dans le corps une légion de démons de luxure." " His Majesty must incorporate a legion of sensual devils," says the court physician Blumentrost. He presumes that the Tsar's scurvy is the outcome of an older ailment which had troubled him in early youth.

To quote the expression of one of the " new Russians"—"The Tsar displays a political leniency with regard to sexual immorality"—the more sinners, the more recruits, and he needs recruits. He himself considers love to be

only a natural instinct. Once during his stay in England, when a courtesan was not satisfied with her present of five hundred guineas, he said to Menshikoff: "You think I am as great a spendthrift as yourself. For five hundred guineas old men serve me with zeal and brains, and this jade has served me damnably badly, you yourself know in what way."

The Tsaritsa is not in the least degree jealous. He relates to her all his affairs of the heart, but always ends with the compliment, "and still you are better than the whole pack of them, Catherine!"

Strange rumours are circulated and voiced abroad with regard to the Tsar's Denshiks. One of them, General Yagoushinsky, is supposed to have gained his master's favours in ways which cannot be well talked about. The handsome Lefort, so says an amiable old gentleman about the Court, was so intimate with the Tsar that they had one mistress between them. It is rumoured that the Tsaritsa, before living with the Tsar, had been the mistress of Ménshikoff. Ménshikoff, in his turn, had taken in Catharine's affections the place of Lefort. This man Ménshikoff, "risen from the mire," who, in the Tsar's own words, was conceived in lawlessness, born to sin, and is ending his life in rascality, has an almost inexplicable power over Peter. The Tsar will sometimes beat him like a dog, throw him to the ground, trample upon him; one would think it was all over, and yet, the next moment, they have again made peace, and are even kissing one another. I have myself heard the Tsar calling him his dear Alexasha, his own darling, and Ménshikoff returned the compliment. This ci-devant street pieman has become so insolent that he said one day to the Tsarevitch (true, he was drunk at the time), "You will see as little of the Crown as of your own ears. The crown is my property."

October 8.

To-day, a Dutch merchant's wife, who died of dropsy, was buried. The Tsar himself performed the operation of tapping her. They say her death was caused less by illness than by the operation. The Tsar was present at both funeral and commemoration banquet. He drank and enjoyed himself vastly. He considers himself a great sur-

geon. Persons about him unlucky enough to have a swelling or gathering do their best to conceal it, for fear the Tsar should begin cutting it. He has a strange liking for anatomy. He cannot see a body without having it dissected, and examines post mortem all the bodies of his relatives.

He delights in drawing teeth, having learnt the art in Holland from a travelling dentist. There is a bagful of rotten teeth extracted by the imperial forceps preserved in the Kunst-Kammer here.

In the face of suffering he displays cynical curiosity and a cynical kindheartedness. He has himself performed an intestinal operation on his page, an Arab.

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His whole nature is a combination of strength and weakness. This is apparent at once even in his face : terrible eyes from which nothing escapes, one look of which suffices to make people swoon ; lips, thin, delicate, almost feminine, with a cunning smile ; a chin, soft, round, plump, with a dimple.

We are positively sick of hearing about the hat pierced with bullets at Poltava : I have no doubt that he can be brave, especially when victorious. All victors are brave. But has he always been as brave as it is believed ?

The Saxon Engineer Hallart, who took part in the Narva campaign of 1700, tells me, that when the Tsar knew of the approach of Charles XII, he made over the command of the army to the Duc de Croy, with instructions hurriedly written, bearing neither date, nor seal, quite unintelligible, confused, and himself in great perturbation quitted the scene of action.

The Swedish prisoner, Count Pipper, has shown me a medal struck by the Swedes ; on one side the Tsar is warming his hands at the fire of his cannons which are sending shells into the besieged Narva. The inscription is—"And Peter stood at the fire and warmed himself," an allusion to the Apostle Peter in the court of the high priest ! On the other side Russians are represented retreating from Narva ; Peter in front, his crown tumbling from his head, his sword thrown away, wipes his tears with a handkerchief ; and

the inscription runs—"And going out, he wept bitterly."

All this may be slander ; yet why has no one even dared to invent slanders about Alexander or Caesar ? Something similarly strange happened during the Pruth campaign. At the most dangerous moment, just before the battle, the Tsar was about to leave the army for the rear, under pretext of bringing up fresh forces. That he did not leave was only due to the retreat being cut off. He wrote to the Senate—that never, since he had been in service, had he been in such despair. Does not this again almost justify the legend that "going out, he wept bitterly ?"

Blumentrost says that doctors know more about heroes than ever will go down to posterity ;—it appears the Tsar cannot endure the slightest physical pain. During a serious illness which was expected to result in death, he was anything but heroic. "It is hardly credible," exclaimed a Russian who had been praising the Tsar in my presence, "that a great and fearless hero should be afraid of so insignificant an insect as a cockroach." When the Tsar travels about Russia, new huts are erected for him to sleep in, as it is difficult to find in Russian villages a dwelling without cockroaches. He is also afraid of spiders and other insects. I myself once observed how at the sight of a cockroach he trembled, his face became pale and contorted, as at a ghost or some supernatural monster ; another moment and he would have swooned or fallen into a fit, like a tremulous woman. O to play a trick upon him, like those he plays on others ! He would probably die of fright if he were stripped and half a dozen spiders and cockroaches were let loose on him. No doubt historians would never believe that the conqueror of Charles XII died from the touch of a cockroach's legs. This dread in the presence of a small harmless creature is astonishing in a great Tsar before whom everybody trembles. I remembered the teaching about monads by Leibnitz ; it almost would seem that it was not their physical, but their metaphysical pre-existent nature, which is alien to the Tsar's nature. His fear was not only ludicrous but awful to me : it seemed as though I had suddenly penetrated some mystery.

One day a learned German, while making experiments before the Tsaritsa with an air pump, had placed a swallow

under the glass dome. When the Tsar saw the little bird gasp, totter, and feebly flap its wings, he said :—

“Enough! Enough! don’t take away innocent life, the bird has done no harm.”

“I think her young ones are mourning for her in the nest,” added the Tsaritsa, and taking the swallow to the window she released and let it fly away.

Sentimental Peter! how strangely this sounds! And yet I saw something closely akin to sentiment flit across those delicate almost feminine lips, the plump and dimpled chin, when the Tsaritsa said in that simpering voice with mincing smile, “her young ones are mourning for her in the nest.”

Was it not on that very day that this terrible ukase was published? “His Imperial Majesty has deigned to observe that the nostrils of convicts sentenced to labour for life are only incompletely torn. His Majesty orders the nostrils to be taken off to the bone, so that in case the convicts should desert they could not hide themselves, but may easily be recognized and brought back.” And this among the Admiralty Regulations: “The body of him who commits suicide must be publicly hanged by the feet.”

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“Is he cruel? That is a question. “He who is cruel ceases to be a hero.” This is one of those sayings ascribed to the Tsar, which I do not quite believe; they seem to be uttered rather for posterity. Yet posterity will know that he, while sparing a swallow, tortured a sister to death, torments his wife, and it seems will, by degrees, murder his son.

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Is he as artless as he seems? this too is doubtful. I know there are a number of stories in circulation with regard to the Tsar carpenter in Saardam. I must confess I never could listen to them without annoyance; they are too instructive, too much like pictures with explanations.

“Verstellte Einfalt;”—“Sham naïvete,” said a witty German about him. The Russians too have a proverb, “The simpleton beats the knave.”

In future all pedants and schoolchildren will certainly

know that Tsar Peter darned his own stockings, mended his boots for economy's sake. But it is doubtful whether they will ever be acquainted with a fact told me lately by a Russian timber merchant.

He said that a huge amount of unused oak timber was lying near Lake Ladoga, covered over with sand and rotting disused. And meanwhile men are lashed and hung for the offence of cutting down and stealing oak. Human life and blood are cheaper than oak wood. I might add, cheaper than torn stockings.

"C'est un grand poseur"—some one had said about him. One ought to watch him kiss the Prince Caesar's hand when he has broken some buffoon's regulation,—“Forgive, sovereign, forgive! We rough sailors are not well versed in ceremony.”

One can hardly trust one's eyes; it is impossible to distinguish where the Tsar ends and the fool begins.

He has surrounded himself with masks. The Tsar Carpenter! 'tis a masquerade after the Dutch fashion?

And is not this new Tsar in his *simplesse*, in his carpenter's disguise, really further removed from the common people, than were the ancient Tsars of Muscovy in their cloth of gold?

“Nowadays life is very hard,” complained the same merchant to me, “nobody is allowed to say anything; the truth never reaches the Tsar. It used to be much simpler in the old days.” I once heard the chaplain Theodosius praise him to his face for the dissimulation which, it appears, political teachers are supposed to lay down as the first duty of sovereigns.

I do not judge him; I only repeat what I hear and see. All see the hero, few the man. And even if I gossip it will be forgiven me, for I am a woman. Some one has said: “This man is very good and very bad;” as for me, I must once more repeat: “I know not whether he is better or worse than other men, but it sometimes seems to me that he is not quite human.”

The Tsar is pious. He reads the Acts, and sings with as much confidence as the priests themselves, seeing he knows the lauds and liturgies by heart. He composes prayers for the soldiers.

Sometimes during a conversation about military or state affairs he suddenly lifts his eyes to heaven, crosses himself and says a short prayer with evident devotion: "O God take not Thy grace from us in the days to come!" or, "Lord grant us Thy mercy, for in Thee have we put our trust!"

This is not hypocrisy. No doubt he believes in God, as he says he puts his trust in the "Lord, strong in battle." Yet it would seem as if his God were not the God of the Christians, but of the pagans, Mars, or Nemesis—Fate herself. Never breathed a human being less like a Christian than Peter. What connection is there between the sword of Mars and the lilies of the Gospels?

I have just read a curious new book published in Germany under the title—*Curieuse Nachricht von der itzigen Religion I. K. M. in Russland Petri Alezievitz und seines grossen Reiches, dass dieselbe itzo fast nach Evangelisch-Lutherischen Grundsätzen eingerichtet sei.*

Here are a few extracts from it. "We are not far wrong in stating that his Majesty's conception of true religion takes the form of the Lutheran faith."

"The Tsar has abolished the Patriarchate, and, following the example of Protestant Princes, he has declared himself the chief Bishop, that is Patriarch of the Russian church. On his return from a journey to foreign countries he at once entered into discussions with his priests, and being convinced of their ignorance on questions of faith—indeed they could hardly read—he instituted schools where they might apply themselves more diligently to study.

"Now that the Russians are reasonably taught and educated in schools, all the superstitious beliefs and customs must of themselves disappear, for no one, except the most ignorant and simple-minded, can believe in such things. In these schools the system of teaching is quite Lutheran, and the young people are brought up according to the rules of true Christian religion. The monasteries are reduced in number, and therefore can no longer, as in olden times, shelter great numbers of idle folk, who are a burden to the state and a danger in times of revolt. Now, the monks are obliged to learn what is useful, and everything is ordered in a praiseworthy manner. Miracles and relics no longer command the reverence they formerly did; in

Russia, as in Germany, people have begun to believe that there is much swindling in connection with religious ceremonial."

I know the Tsarevitch has read this book. What must his feelings have been during the perusal !

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I was present one day when, while at their wine in the oakgrove of the Summer Garden, where the Tsar likes to converse with the clergy, the Administrator of Spiritual Affairs, the Archimandrite Theodosius, was elaborating reasons : " Why and in what sense the Roman Emperors, both pagan and Christian, termed themselves Pontifex and high priests of the polytheistic faith." It appeared that the Tsar was the head prelate, High Priest, and Patriarch. This Russian monk very skilfully and adroitly proved that, according to "*Leviathan*" by the English Atheist Hobbes, the maxim "*Civitatem et ecclesiam eandem rem esse*"—"the state and the church are one and the same"—certainly did not advocate converting the state into a church, but on the contrary, the conversion of the church into the state. The monstrous animal—*Leviathan*, fabric of the state—was swallowing up the Church of God, so that there would remain no trace of it. These discussions might serve as an interesting monument of monkish cringing and flattery before the sovereign.

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It is said that already at the end of last year, 1714, the Tsar called together the spiritual and lay dignitaries, to whom he solemnly declared that he wishes to be the sole head of the Russian Church, and leaves it to them to establish a spiritual association under the name of the "Holy Synod."

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The Tsar is planning a campaign against India, in the footsteps of Alexander the Great. To imitate Alexander and Caesar, to unite the East with the West, to found a new world-wide monarchy, these are the Russian Tsar's deepest and dearest desires.

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Theodosius tells the Tsar, "You are the God of the Earth, For this is the meaning of Divus Caesar."

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At the Poltava celebrations the Russian Tsar was represented on one of the allegorical pictures as Apollo, the ancient Sun-God.

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I learn that the dead heads which are still on the poles near Trinity Church, opposite to the Senate-house, were the heads of Raskolniks who have been beheaded for calling the Tsar "Antichrist."

October 20.

An old invalid, an army captain, comes sometimes into our kitchen. He is a pathetic-looking moth-eaten creature; his head trembles, his nose is red, and he has a wooden leg; he terms himself a "granary rat." I treat him to brandy and tobacco, and we talk about Russian military affairs.

He is very cheerful and sprinkles his speech with quaint sayings, such as "A soldier serves a hundred years yet does not earn a hundred sous; "Grain is satisfying, water intoxicating;" "Shave with an awl, warm thyself with smoke." He has three doctors—brandy, garlic and Death.

When almost a child he became a drummer boy; he has taken part in all the campaigns from Asoff to Poltava, and has been rewarded by the Father Tsar with a handful of nuts and a kiss on the head. When speaking of the Tsar he seems to become transfigured; and to-day he told me about the battle near the Red Farm.

"We stood firm for the House of the Holy Virgin, the Serene Majesty our Tsar, and the Christian Faith; we died for one another. We all cried with a great voice: 'Lord God! Help us!' Then we beat the Swedish regiments, both infantry and artillery, by the help of the prayers of the saints of Holy Moscow."

He also attempted to repeat the Tsar's speech to his army.

"Children I have begotten you in the sweat of my toil. The state cannot exist without you, any more than the body without a soul. You have shown your love to God, to me, and your country; you have not spared your lives." The old man suddenly started up on his wooden leg, his nose grew redder yet, a tear hung on its tip like a dew-

drop on a ripe plum, and waving his old hat he exclaimed :
"Vivat ! vivat ! vivat ! Peter the Great ! Emperor of all the Russias !"

Up till now I had heard no one call the Tsar "Emperor," yet I was not surprised. Such fire lit up the dim eyes of the "granary rat" that a cold shiver ran through me ; a vision of ancient Rome seemed to flash before me ; I heard the rustle of victorious standards, the trampling of brazen cohorts, the cries of soldiers, the acclamations of divine Caesar, ' Divus Caesar Imperator ! '

October 23.

We have been to the People's market on the Trinity square, a long whitewashed building erected by the Italian architect Tresina ; it is roofed with tiles and has arcades, such as are seen in Verona or Padua. We went into the bookshop, the first and only one in Petersburg, which has been opened by order of the Tsar ; Basil Evdokimoff, a printer, is the manager. Besides books, Slavonic and translated, there are sold here calendars, decrees, primers, plans of battles, and "royal persons" ; that is, portraits, and pictures of triumphant entries. The books sell badly. In the course of two or three years not a single copy of some publications has been sold. Calendars and decrees in relation to bribes sell better than anything else.

The director of the first printing press in Petersburg, a certain Avramoff, a strange but rather clever man, whom we chanced to meet in the shop, told us how difficult it is to get the foreign books translated into Russian. The Tsar is always in a great hurry, and demands, under threat of severe lashing, that the book should be translated in an impossibly short time, intelligibly and in good style. The translators weepingly complain that it is impossible to hurry with the involved German style, which is incomprehensible, confused and heavy. Sometimes it has happened that despite incredible labour ten lines a day could not be rendered successfully. Boris Wolkoff, the translator to the foreign department, despaired of translating *Le Jardinage de Quintiny*, and, fearing the Tsar's wrath, killed himself by opening his veins.

Knowledge does not come easily to Russians.

These translations which cost so much sweat, and even

blood, are neither read nor needed by any one. Not long ago a number of books which did not sell, and which were taking up too much room in the shop, were piled up in the shed of the Armoury court. During the flood they were covered with water, and they are now spoilt, partly by damp, partly by hemp oil, which, for some inexplicable reason, has found its way among them, while many are mouse-eaten.

November 14.

We have been to the theatre. The large wooden structure, the "Comedy House," is not far off the Foundry. The performance begins at six p.m., for which tickets, printed on stout paper, can be obtained in a separate office; the poorest seat costs forty kopecks. The audiences are scanty, and, but for the court, the actors would die of starvation. The felt on the walls does not prevent the building being cold, damp and draughty; the tallow candles smoke; the poor music is always out of tune, and, to crown all, the people in the pit noisily crack their nuts and rail at one another the whole time. The comedy of "Don Juan and Don Pedro" was the piece, a Russian translation from the German, which itself was an adaptation from the French "Don Juan." After every act the curtain went down, leaving us in utter darkness during the scene shifting. My neighbour, chamberlain Brandenstein, was very much put out by this. He whispered to me: *Welch ein Hund von Komödie ist das?*—"What devil of a comedy is this?" I could hardly restrain my laughter. Don Juan was in the garden talking with the woman he had seduced.

"Come my love, let us recall that pleasant time when undisturbed we enjoyed the delights of spring, the green buds of love. Let our rapture be completed by the sight of these flowers and their delicious smell."

I liked the song:

He who knows not love
Know not what deceit is.
They call a God, this love
Who torments more than death does.

Each act was followed by an intermezzo which generally ended in a scuffle.

Bibernstein, who had dropped asleep, had a silk hand-

kerchief stolen from his pocket ; young Loewenwald a silver snuff-box.

Another piece followed, entitled " Daphne, pursued by the love sick Apollo, is transformed into a Laurel tree."

Apollo threatens the nymph :

I will force thee to submit,
I really cannot suffer it.

She answers :

You so rudely do behave,
That to love you I don't crave.

At this moment some drunken grooms began fighting together at the entrance. People hurried to separate them ; they were whipped, and the dialogue of the God and the Nymph was drowned amid groans and ribald shouting.

At last the morning star Phosphoros announced : " The play is over, our best thanks to you, 'tis time for bed."

We were given a manuscript programme announcing a performance in another tent : " For fifty kopecks each person will be entitled to witness the performance of ' Doctor Faustus ' by Italian Marionettes or Dolls, two yards high, who will walk about the stage, and act almost as adroitly as living actors. The Trained Horse will perform as before."

I must confess, I never expected to see Faustus in Petersburg, much less in the company of a learned horse !

Not long ago, at this same theatre, Molière's " Précieuses ridicules " was performed. I procured the translation and read it. The Tsar had ordered one of his fools, the " King of the Samoyeds," to make the translation ; the translator was probably drunk when he did it, for some of the passages were quite unintelligible. Poor Molière ! the monstrous galantries of a Samoyed are as graceful as those of a white dancing bear.

November 23.

A hard frost with a piercing wind, a real ice-storm. The noses and ears of pedestrians are frostbitten before they know it. It is said that in one night 700 working men have been frozen to death between Petersburg and Kronsloot.

Wolves have appeared in the streets, even in the centre of the town ; a few days ago wolves fell on the sentinel at

night near the foundry, which is close to the theatre where "Daphne and Apollo" had been performed. Another soldier came to his rescue, but he too was almost instantly torn to pieces and devoured. A woman and her child have been eaten by wolves in broad daylight, not far from Prince Ménshikoff's palace on the Basil Island.

Not less terrible than the wolves are the robbers. Sentry huts, barriers, hunting poles, sentinels with large clubs and night watches, "like those in Hamburg," do not suffice to intimidate the robbers. Every night, either some house is broken into, or some stealthy burglary or murder takes place.

November 30.

A moist wind—and the snow and ice have melted. The mud is impassable. There is a stench of marsh, dung, and rotten fish. Epidemics abound.

December 4.

Again frost—frost without snow. It is so slippery that one runs the risk of breaking one's neck at every step.

And these changes of temperature continue throughout the winter. Nature seems not only cruel, but positively mad.

An unnatural city! How can art and knowledge flourish? They have a saying here: "No time for luxuries—we can only just manage to live."

December 10.

Went to an Assembly—a rout at Tolstoi's:

Mirrors, glass, powder, beauty spots, hoop-petticoats, and curtesies and bows—just as we have in Europe, in Paris and in London.

The host himself is an amiable, learned man. He translates Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and the political advice of Niccolo Machiavelli, the noble citizen of Florence. He took me through the minuet, addressing me with compliments from Ovid. He compared me to Galatea, because of my skin, "white as marble," and my black hair, "the colour of hyacinth"—an entertaining old gentleman! clever, yet a thorough paced knave. I will note down a few sayings of this modern Machiavelli:

"When good luck comes it is not enough to grasp it with both hands, try also to catch hold of it with your teeth and swallow it."

"To live in high favour is like walking on a glass floor."

"A lemon which is too much squeezed will give bitterness instead of flavour."

"To know the human mind and character is the highest philosophy. It is more difficult to understand men than to know many books by heart."

Listening to Tolstoi's witty remarks—he spoke to me, now in Russian, now in Italian—to the delicate strains of the French minuet, I looked at the polite gathering of ladies and gentlemen where everything was almost the same as "in Paris or London," yet I could not forget what I had just seen on my way thither. Before the Senate on the Trinity Square rose those gaunt poles, bearing the same heads as in May at the time of the masquerade. They dried, grew wet, froze, melted, froze again, and still they had not disappeared. A huge moon was rising from behind Trinity Church, and the black heads stood out sharply against the red glow. A crow perched on one of them, cawing and pecking at the skin. This vision was before me all the evening. Asia was casting a shadow over Europe.

The Tsar arrived; he was not in a good humour. He shook his head and shrugged his shoulders in such a way as to make every one present tremble. On entering the dancing room he found it too hot, and wanted a window opened. The windows were nailed up on the outside. The Tsar ordered an axe to be brought, and together with two orderlies he set to work upon it. He ran out into the street to see how the window had been nailed up. At last he succeeded in getting the frame out. The window remained open only for a short time, and it was not cold outside; snow was again melting, and a west wind was blowing. Yet, nevertheless, it caused a strong draught in the rooms, and the lightly dressed ladies and shivery old men did not know what to do with themselves. This performance had tired Peter and had made him perspire, but he seemed in better spirits.

"Your Majesty," said the Austrian Resident Pleyer, a very courteous gentleman, "you have broken a window into Europe."

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The seal which was used for sealing the Tsar's letters addressed to Russia during his first journey abroad, represented a young carpenter surrounded by a shipwright's tools and the arms of war, with the inscription :—

" I am a scholar, and what I ask for is teachers."

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Another emblem of the Tsar's is Prometheus bringing a burning torch to men from the gods.

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The Tsar says : " I will create a new race of men."

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The following story was related to me by the " granary rat." The Tsar desires that oaks should be grown everywhere, and was himself planting some acorns near Petersburg, along the Peterhof road. Noticing that one of the bystanders, a dignitary, was smiling at his work, the Tsar angrily remarked :

" I understand ; you think I shall not live to see the full-grown oaks ; you are right. Nevertheless you are a fool : I set an example for others to follow, so that our descendants may one day use these trees for building ships. It is not for myself I toil ; the welfare of the state comes first."

* * * * *

Another story from the same source.

A decree of his Majesty commanded that all children of the nobility should matriculate in Moscow at the Soukhareva Tower for the learning of Navigation. The nobility, however, instead, enrolled their children at the Spassky monastery in Moscow to learn Latin. On hearing this the monarch was sorely angered and ordered the Governor of Moscow, Prince Romodanovsky, to take all the children from the monastery and bring them to Petersburg, where they were made to drive in piles along the Moika for the foundation of hemp sheds. The Admiral, Count Fedor Apraksin, Prince Ménshikoff, Prince James Dolgoruki, and other senators, not daring to trouble his Majesty, petitioned his Majesty's helpmate, the Tsaritsa Catherine, on their knees, with tears in their eyes ; yet it was impossible to appease his Majesty's wrath. Then Admiral Apraksin

conceived this plan: he set watchmen to let him know when the Emperor should drive past the working children. Directly they informed him that the Tsar was coming, Apraksin hurried up to the young toiling boys, took off his decoration and kaftan, hung them on a pole, and began to drive in piles with the children. The Tsar noticing the Admiral thus employed stopped and said to him:—

“Fedor Matvievitch! you are an Admiral and a Knight. Why do you drive in piles?”

To which the Admiral replied:—

“My nephews and grandsons are driving in piles, and who am I specially to enjoy the prerogatives of rank? As for the decoration granted to me by your Majesty, it hangs on the post, I have not dishonoured it.”

On hearing this the Tsar continued on his way to the palace, and twenty-four hours later he published a decree liberating the young nobles; yet at the same time he enrolled them to learn divers practical crafts and arts abroad. He was angered; and so even after driving in piles they did not escape technical instruction.

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One of the few Russians, who are in sympathy with the new order of things, said to me in reference to the Tsar:—

“Whatever you look at in Russia has been started by him; and anything done in the future will be traced back to this origin. He has renewed all things, has caused Russia to be born anew.

December 28.

The Tsarevitch has returned as unexpectedly as he went.

Januray 26, 1715.

We had visitors; Baron Loewenwold, the Austrian Resident Pleyer, the Hanoverian Secretary Weber, and the court physician Blumentrost. After supper, over the wine, conversation turned on the new ways introduced by the Tsar. They spoke freely, being among themselves, with no strangers or Russians present.

“The Muscovites,” said Pleyer “do everything because they are compelled to do it. Should the Tsar die, farewell to all knowledge. Russia is a country where everything

is begun and nothing finished. The Tsar acts upon his people like strong brandy on iron; he drives knowledge into his subjects with the lash and the rod, believing in the Russian proverb: 'the stick though dumb can teach.' Puffendorf was right in describing this people as: 'a servile people who humble themselves like slaves, and love to be kept in obedience by the cruelty of their rulers.' To them would also apply the words of Aristotle, as to barbarians in general: 'quod in libertate mali, in servitute boni sunt.' True enlightenment inspires hatred of slavery. And the Russian Tsar is by the nature of his power a despot; what he needs are slaves. That is why he zealously introduces arithmetic, navigation, fortification, and other elementary and useful knowledge to his people; yet he will never let his subjects gain that true enlightenment which requires freedom. And, after all, he himself neither understands nor likes it; all he seeks in knowledge is utility. He prefers Perpetuum mobile, the absurd invention of Orphireus, to all the philosophy of Leibnitz. Æsop he considers to be the greatest philosopher. He has prohibited the translation of Juvenal, declaring that the composer of a single satire will be liable to the severest torture. Enlightenment stands in the same relation to the power of Russia's Tsars as sunshine to the snow. When feeble the snow shimmers and dazzles; when strong the snow melts."

"Who can tell," remarked Weber with a meaning smile, "the Russians in taking Europe for their pattern may have honoured her above her deserts. Imitation is always dangerous. Vices are more easily imitated than virtues, as a Russian well expressed it. The foreign infectious corruption eats out the ancient health of Russian souls and bodies; roughness of character has lessened, but only flattery and servility have taken its place; we have outlived our old common-sense, but we have not acquired any new sense; we shall all die fools!"

"The Tsar," rejoined Baron Loewenwold, "is far from being the humble pupil of Europe for which many take him. One day, when French customs and temperament were highly praised in his presence, he said: 'It is well to imitate their arts and science—as for the rest, Paris is rotten,' and

then he added with a prophetic air, 'I am sorry that the inhabitants of that town will perish from its corruption.' I have not heard it myself, but I was told another saying of his which friends of Russia in Europe would do well to remember, 'L'Europe nous est nécessaire pour quelques dizaines d'années; après quoi nous lui tournerons le dos.'—'We need Europe for some few decades, after which we will turn our backs upon her.' "

Count Pepper gave some extracts from a book which had lately been published, "*La crise du nord*," about the war between Russia and Sweden, in which it was proved that the Russian victory was a sign that the end of the world was drawing nigh, and that the insignificance of Russia was necessary for the welfare of Europe. The Count also recalled the words of Leibnitz which were uttered by the great philosopher before Poltava, while he was still the friend of Sweden: "Moscovy will be a second Turkey and will open the way to new barbarisms, which will annihilate all European civilization!"

Blumentrost reassured us, saying that brandy, together with venereal diseases, which had spread with amazing rapidity during late years from Poland across to the White Sea, would depopulate Russia in less than a century. "Brandy and syphilis are, so to speak, two scourges sent by God's providence to save Europe from a new invasion of barbarians."

"Russia," concluded Pleyer, "is a brazen Colossus on clay feet. It will fall and break, and nothing will remain."

I profess no great love for the Russians myself, but I did not expect my compatriots to hate Russia so much. To me there seems behind this hatred a secret fear; as if we Germans had a presentiment that one will eventually swallow up the other, either we them, or they us.

January 17.

"Well, Fräulein Juliana, what have you decided about me? Am I fool or a knave?" The Tsarevitch stopped me this morning on the staircase with this question.

At first I could not understand what he meant, and, thinking he was drunk, I tried to pass without answering him. Yet he detained me, and continued, looking me straight in the face:—

"It will be interesting to know *which of us will eat up the other, you us, or we you?*"

Then only did I perceive that he had read my diary. I had lent it to her Highness for a short time, as she had expressed the desire to read it; the Tsarevitch had, probably, been in her room in her absence and seeing the diary he had read it.

I was so confused, that I was ready to fall through the earth. I blushed up to the very roots of my hair, almost crying like a school-girl trapped in a fault. And he continued to scrutinise me in silence, as if delighting in my confusion. At last, making a desperate effort, I tried to escape, but he caught hold of my hand. My heart sank within me for very fear.

"Well, you have been caught, Fräulein," he laughed in a merry, kind way. "Be more prudent in the future. It is well that I, and not somebody else, read it. Your Ladyship has a tongue as sharp as a razor, I must say, though all had their share. But, to be candid, there is much truth in what you say about us; there really is. And though you don't pat us on the back, yet we ought to be grateful for your frankness."

He stopped laughing, and with a bright smile he warmly squeezed my hand like a comrade, as if he were really thanking me for the truth.

A strange man. These Russians are as a rule strange beings. It is impossible to foretell what they will do or say next.

The more I think over it, the more it seems that there is something in them which we Europeans cannot, and never will be able to understand. To us they are the inhabitants of another planet.

February 2.

When passing along the corridor this evening, the Tsarevitch hearing my footsteps called, and asked me to come into the dining-room; he was alone, sitting before the hearth in the dusk. He made me sit down opposite to him, and began to talk to me, first in German, then in Russian; he spoke affectionately, as if we had been old friends. He told me things of considerable interest, but I will not put all down; it would be dangerous both for him and myself

while I am in Russia. Here are just a few stray thoughts.

What amazed me most of all was to find that he is in no wise such a zealous partisan of all that is old, and enemy of all that is new, as he is generally believed to be.

He repeated me a Russian proverb, "Age always commends its own baldness." Wrong is deep seated in Russia, and unless the old edifice is taken to pieces, and every log carefully scrutinized, it will be impossible to get rid of the ancient rot and decay.

The Tsar's fault lies in his hurry.

"My father will have everything done quickly; one, two, three, and a ship is built! He won't see that rapidity does not always mean durability. A blow, a knock, the wheel is made. Take your seat, away we go, how delightful! Suddenly a look behind—the loose spokes are all over the ground!"

February 18.

The Tsarevitch has a note book wherein he copies passages from *The Chronicles of Church and State*, by Baronius, which he says apply to himself, his father and others in such a way as to illustrate the difference between what used to be and what exists now. He lent me the notes to look at. They reveal a probing and liberal mind. In reference to several legends in which the miraculous is obviously exaggerated (it is true they belonged to the Roman Catholic period) I saw annotations of this kind; "Compare with the Greek." "Doubtful." "This is hardly true."

But I was most interested in those notes, in which he compared historical facts and incidents of ancient Russia and foreign nations with the Russia of to-day.

A.D. 395.—"The Emperor Arcadius ordered all those who in the least degree deviated from orthodoxy to be called heretics." (An allusion to the non-orthodoxy of the Russian Tsar.)

A.D. 455.—"The Emperor Valentinian was slain for interfering with the rights of the Church as to adultery. (An allusion to the abolition of the Patriarchate, and the Tsar's marriage with Catherine during the lifetime of his first wife, Eudoxia Lopoukhin.)

A.D. 514.—"Long coats were worn in France. Charles the Great ordered short coats. Praised be the long coats,

shame upon the short ones." (This was noted with reference the present change of Russian dress.)

A.D. 814.—"A monk induced the Emperor Leo to reject the worship of ikons." (An allusion to the monk Theodosius, the Tsar's chaplain, who, it is said, advises the Tsar to abolish the reverence of ikons.)

A.D. 854.—"The Emperor Michael played with the Church sacraments." (An allusion to the institution of the conclave of drunkards, the wedding of the mock Patriarch, and many other diversions of the Tsar.)

Here are a few more thoughts.

"In relation to the Papal power : Christ pronounced all His disciples equal. To say that it is impossible to be saved without the absolution of the Church is an obvious lie, for Christ said, 'he who believes on Me shall have life everlasting, not on the Roman Church, which did not exist at that time. Many people were saved long before the Apostles' preaching had even reached Rome.'"

"The Mohammedan irreligion spread owing to women. Women have a liking for false prophets," These few words, worthy of the great sceptic Beyle, reveal more about Mohammed than any of the learned researches.

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Tolstoi said to me one day, with his sly foxy smile, in reference to the Tsarevitch : "The best way to gain popularity is this, in case of necessity to be able to don the skin of the stupidest of beasts."

I did not comprehend his meaning at the time, only now am I beginning to understand.

In a work by an antique English writer—I forget his name—entitled : "The Tragedy of Hamlet the Dane," this unhappy prince, persecuted by his enemies, pretends to be either a fool or a madman.

Is the Russian prince following Hamlet's example ? Has he not donned the hide of the simplest of the beasts ?

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It is rumoured that the Tsarevitch once had the courage to be candid with his father, and pleaded before him the people's intense suffering. He has been in disgrace ever since.

February 23.

He tenderly loves his little daughter Natasha.

To-day he spent the whole of the morning sitting with her on the floor, building houses and huts out of small wooden logs. He crawled about on all fours, making believe to be a dog, a horse, a wolf. He played at ball, and when it rolled under the bed or cupboard he fetched it out again, covering himself with dust and cobwebs. He took her to his room, dandling her and showing her to everybody saying :—

“ Is she not a fine girl ? Where can you find another like her ? ”

He himself played with her like a little boy.

Natasha is clever beyond her age. When she wants to seize something forbidden and you threaten to tell her mother, she at once becomes quiet, but if you simply tell her to stop, she will begin to laugh and continue all the more. When she sees that her father is in an ill-humour she is very quiet and only gazes at him ; if he turns to her she laughs loudly and waves her hands.

She fondles him like a grown up person.

I have a queer feeling when I watch her doing this. The child not only seems to love him, but also to pity him, as if she knew and saw something about him which no one else is yet aware of. It is an uncanny feeling, like that which I felt when I saw the father and mother in a dark prophetic mirror.

March 2.

“ I know she loves me; she left everything for my sake,” he said once in reference to his wife.

Now that I understand the Tsarevitch better, I no longer can attach all the blame to him only for their hard life together. Both are innocent and both at fault. They are too different, too melancholy, each in their own way. Small common griefs unite, but grief great and intense divides.

They are like two persons seriously ill—wounded—lying on a bed together. They cannot help each other : and the least movement of either causes pain to both.

There are people to whom suffering has become second nature ; without it they feel out of their natural element. With such persons thoughts and sentiments once having

drooped will droop perpetually, like the branches of a weeping willow. Her Highness is one of these beings.

The Tsarevitch has much grief of his own, and every time he sees his wife, he sees another grief, a grief which cannot be allayed, so he pities her. But love and pity are not one and the same ; he who wants to be loved must eschew pity. I know from personal experience what torture it is to pity where no help can be given ; at last one begins to dread him for whom pity has so long proved in vain.

Yes, both are innocent, both are unhappy, and no one but God can help them. Poor, poor couple ! I dread what all this may lead to ; yet it were better if the end come soon.

March 7.

Her Highness is again with child.

May 12.

We are in Roshdestveno, the Crown Prince's country house, seventy versts away from Petersburg, in the Koporsky district.

I have been ill for a long time. They thought I should die. The thought of dying in Russia was more terrible to me than death itself. Her Highness brought me here to Roshdestveno to give me a rest and chance of recovering my strength in the pure air.

Woods surround us ; all is peaceful ; nothing is heard save the rustling of leaves and the warbling of birds. The small river Oredesh hurries along like a torrent ; its murmuring rises from beneath the steep slope of red clay, which is now shrouded in a transparent haze of young birch leaves, broken by the dark green of the firs.

The wooden country-house is built like the simple village huts. The principal hall, two stories high with a terem like the Moscow palaces, is not yet finished. Next to it stands a small chapel, with belfry and two bells, which the Tsarevitch delights in ringing himself. At the gates an old Swedish cannon and a small heap of iron balls which are covered with rust and overgrown with grass and yellow spring flowers. Altogether this is a real monastery—a kind of cloister in the woods.

The walls inside the houses are bare and show the beams ; there is a scent of resin, with amber drops trickling like tears everywhere. Holy lamps are glimmering before the

images. All is bright, fresh, clean, and innocently young.

The Tsarevitch is fond of this spot. He says he would like to live here always, and demands nothing better than to be left alone.

He reads, writes in the library, prays in the chapel, works in the garden and the orchard, fishes and roams about the forest. At this moment I see him from the window of my room. He has just been digging in the beds, planting bulbs of tulips from Haarlem ; now he stands resting on the spade, as still, as if he were trying to catch some sound. Infinite stillness reigns around. Only the axe of a woodcutter is heard somewhere far, far away in the wood, and the call of the cuckoo. His face is calm and joyous. His lips are moving ; he is probably humming one of his favourite prayers or hymns, the akathist of his saint, Alexis the Man of God, or the Psalm :

“ I will sing unto the Lord all the days of my life. I will sing unto my God while I have my being.”

May 16.

Nowhere have I seen such evening glows as here. To-day the sunset was particularly strange ; the whole of the sky bathed in blood, red clouds were scattered like rags of bloodstained garments ; it seemed as though a murder or some sacrifice had been performed in the skies, and that blood was running down from heaven upon the earth. Amid the jet-black pointed needles of the firwood the patches of red clay showed like blood stains.

As I stood looking in amazement I heard a voice from somewhere above me, coming as it were from this terrible sky :

“ Fräulein Juliana ! ”

It was the Tsarevitch who called me, standing on the dove house, in his hand a long pole, such as are used here to scare away doves. He is a great lover of doves.

I went up the shaky ladder and on reaching the platform the white doves started, like snow flakes to which the evening glow had given a roseate hue, surrounding us with the wind and rustle of their wings.

We sat down on the bench, and, little by little, drifted again, as we had repeatedly done of late, into a religious discussion.

"Your Martin Luther has allowed himself to be guided by the Spirit of the world and by his own personal predilections, not by the steadfastness of his soul. And you, poor things, have allowed yourselves to be caught by the allurements of an easy life.

"You have believed the words of your seducer and you left the narrow difficult path ordained by Christ Himself. Martin has shown himself to be an universal fool; the great poison of the serpent of hell is hid in his teaching."

I have got used to Russian pleasantries and no longer take any notice of them; reasonable proofs avail as much in arguing with such people, as a rapier against a club. But this time I was roused, for some reason or other, and I spoke out all that for a long time I had stored up within my heart.

I began by showing that the Russians, while considering themselves superior to all Christian people, lived in reality worse than heathens; they confess the law of love, and yet practise such cruelties as are met with nowhere else in the world; they fast, and during the fast they drink like beasts; they go to church and use the most shocking expressions there; they are so ignorant that in Germany young children know more about religion than adults and priests in Russia. Hardly one out of a dozen could say the Lord's Prayer. A pious old woman answered my question, who is the third person in the Trinity? by asserting he was St. Nicholas the wonderworker. And really this Nicholas is a true Russian God, and one might easily believe that they had none other God but he. Not in vain did the Swedish theologian Botivid in 1620, discuss the question in a thesis at the Upsala Academy, "Are the Muscovites Christians?" I know not how much more I would have said had not the Tsarevitch stopped me; he had the whole time listened with perfect calmness, it was this calm that exasperated me.

"I have meant for a long time, to ask you, Fräulein: Do you believe in the Divinity of Christ?"

"What do you mean? Does not your Highness know that all we Lutherans——"

"I do not speak generally now, I am asking you in particular. I had once a talk with your teacher Leibnitz: he shifted and shuffled, avoiding a direct answer, but, never-

theless, I at once saw that he did not truly believe in Christ. And now what about you?"

He steadily looked at me. I cast down my eyes, and for some inexplicable reason suddenly remembered all my doubts, my debates with Leibnitz, the unsolvable contradictions of metaphysics and theology.

"I think," said I, trying also to shuffle, "that Christ was the best and wisest of the sons of men."

"And not God's son?"

"We are all sons of God."

"And is He like unto the rest?"

Unwilling to lie I remained silent.

"Well, that is the point," he said, with such an expression on his face as I had never seen before. "Your people are wise, learned, strong, honourable, famous. You have everything; but you don't possess Christ, and you don't need Him, you save yourselves. We, on the other hand, are stupid, poor, naked, drunk, repugnant, we are worse than barbarians, worse than beasts, and are ever on the brink of falling. But we have the Christ, our Lord with us, and with us He will remain from eternity to eternity. It is by Him, our Light, that we are saved."

He spoke about Christ as I had noticed the common people, the moujiks, speak here, as if He were their own, one of their family, a moujik just like themselves. I know not whether this is a sign of the highest pride and blasphemous, or, one of the greatest humility and sanctity.

We both remained silent. The doves were returning to their house, and settling down thickly between us, their white fluttering wings as it were uniting us.

Her Highness sent for me. When I had come down, I turned round to have a last look at the Tsarevitch; he was feeding the doves. They had surrounded him, perched on his hands, shoulders, head. He stood there high above the black charred wood in the red blood-stained sky, covered with them, as if wrapt in white wings.

October 31, 1715.

Now that all is over I will end this diary also.

We had returned to Petersburg from Roshdestveno towards the end of May. About the middle of August—ten weeks before the time of her Highness's delivery, she

fell on the stairs and hurt her left side. They say she made a false step, because the heel of her slipper was broken, but in reality she fainted. She had seen below in the courtyard the Tsarevitch drunk, embracing and kissing his mistress, the serf-girl Afrossinia.

He had been living with her for a long time ; he does it almost publicly ; on his return from Karlsbad he took her into the quarter of the house which he inhabits. I did not mention this in my diary, afraid lest her Highness should read it.

Did she know ? Even if she did, she tried not to know, she did not believe it till she saw it. A serf-girl is the rival of the Duchess of Wolfenbüttel—the Emperor's sister-in-law. "Things which never happen, happen in Russia," said a Russian to me. The father with a laundress, the son with a serf-girl !

Some say she is a Finnish woman, taken prisoner by soldiers in the same way as the Tsaritsa ; others say she is a serf belonging to the tutor of the Tsarevitch—Nikiphor Viasemski ; the latter statement seems more probable. She is handsome enough, yet her low origin is at once obvious. She is tall, fair-skinned, and has auburn hair, her nose is slightly turned up ; her eyes are large, clear, slanting and almond shape like a Kalmuck's, with the untamed gaze of a wild goat. She seems, on the whole, to have something goatlike about her, like the female satyr in Rubens' picture of the Bacchanalia. It is one of those faces which revolt us women, and almost invariably please men. The Tsarevitch is supposed to be madly in love with her. It is said that when they first met she was innocent, shy, tameless, and for a long time resisted him. He did not please her at all. Neither promises nor threats would help. But once, after a drinking bout, he met her in one of those fits of madness which he, like his father, is subject to. He beat her unmercifully and nearly killed her ; then threatening to stab, at last seduced her. Russian manners !

And this is the same being who looked so like a saint when in the woods of Roshdestveno, sang the akathist to Alexis the Man of God, and, surrounded by doves, spoke about the Lord Christ ! For the rest, it is a special Russian

gift to unite such extremes—a gift which, thank the Lord ! has as yet not been revealed to us foolish foreigners.

The Tsarevitch himself once told me : “ We Russians can never keep the middle path, but are always roving either on the heights or in the abysses.”

After the fall her Highness felt a pain in her left side. “ I feel as if pins were pricking my body all over,” she used to say, yet, on the whole, she was calm, as if she had finally made up her mind, and knew that nothing would alter her decision. She never talked to me about the Tsarevitch again, neither did she complain of her lot. Only once she said : “ I know I am irrevocably doomed. I hope my sufferings will soon end ; I long for nothing in the world so eagerly as for death. Death is my sole salvation.”

On October 12th she was safely delivered of a boy, the future heir to the throne, Peter Alexyevitch. The first days after her confinement she felt well, yet when people congratulated her, and wished her good health, she would grow angry and ask everyone to pray God to send her death. “ I want to die, and die I will,” she said, with that awful, calm determination which never left her again. She obeyed neither doctors nor midwife ; she seemed purposely to do everything which was forbidden her. On the fourth day she sat in an armchair, ordered herself to be carried into another room, and gave the child the breast herself. That same night she felt worse : fever set in, sickness, convulsions and such pains, that she cried out more than at the time of her delivery.

When the Tsar, who himself was ill at that time, knew about it, he sent Prince Ménshikoff and four court physicians, Areskin, Polikolo, and the two Blumentrosts, to hold a consultation. They found her dying, in *mortis limine*.

When they tried to persuade her to take medicine she tossed the glass to the ground, saying : “ Don’t torment me, let me go peacefully, I don’t want to live.”

The day before her death she summoned Baron Loewenwold and communicated to him her last will : none of her people were to speak ill of the Tsarevitch, either here or in Germany ; she was dying young, earlier than she expected, yet she was content with her lot and blamed none.

Then she took leave of us all. She gave me her blessing like a mother.

The Tsarevitch did not leave her. His face was terrible to look at. He fainted three times. She did not talk to him; it almost seemed that she did not recognize him. Only just before all was over, when he pressed her hand to his lips, she looked at him with a long look, and said something in a low voice. All I could hear was :—

“Soon, soon we shall see each other again !”

She died as if she had fallen asleep. The dead face expressed more happiness than it had ever shown in her lifetime.

By the Tsar's order a post mortem examination was made, he himself being present.

The funeral was fixed for October 27th. There was a long discussion whether the rank of a Crown Princess demanded cannon to be fired at her funeral; if so, how many guns to the salute. All the foreign ambassadors were questioned on the subject. The Tsar troubled himself more about this cannonade than he had ever troubled himself about the lot of her Highness when alive. It was decided not to fire.

The coffin was borne along a narrow bridge constructed on purpose, from the house to the Neva. The Tsar and Tsarevitch walked behind the coffin. The Tsaritsa was not present—she hourly expected her delivery. A mourning frigate stood waiting on the Neva; it was draped with black, and black standards were hoisted on it. Slowly to the sounds of funeral music, the ship bore us towards the Peter and Paul Cathedral, not yet completed, where the grave of the Crown Princess had to remain under the open sky until the closing of the vaulted roof. The sky wept over her when alive; it will rain on her when dead.

The evening was dull and calm, the sky seemed like the vault of a grave; the Neva, a dark gloomy mirror. The town, wrapped in mist appeared like a phantom or nightmare. All I had experienced, seen, and heard in this dreadful city, now, more than ever, seemed to me as a dream.

From the cathedral we returned at night to the house of the Tsarevitch, for a commemoration banquet. Here

the Tsar handed a letter to his son ; I learnt later that he threatened to disinherit and curse him unless he reformed.

The next day the Tsaritsa was delivered of a son.

The fate of Russia wavers between those two children, the son and the grandson of the Tsar.

November 1.

I went in to the Tsarevitch last evening to talk over my departure for Germany. He sat near the lighted stove and was thrusting in burning papers, letters and manuscripts. He is probably afraid of some search.

He was holding in his hand and was just about to throw into the fire a small booklet in a well worn leather binding, when—I am even now amazed at my presumption—I inquired what it was. He handed it to me. I looked inside. It was his diary and notes. The ruling passion of women in general, and of myself in particular, is curiosity. It made me be guilty of a still greater presumption, I asked if I might borrow it to read.

He thought for a minute, then looking at me, and with his sweet childlike smile of which I am so fond :

“ Quid pro quo—I read your diary, you can read mine.”

He made me promise that I would never talk to anybody about these notes and would return them to be burnt on the morrow. I have sat up the whole night with them ; the booklet itself is really an old Russian calendar, a church calendar printed at Kiev. It had been given to the Tsarevitch by the late Metropolitan of Rostov, Demetrius, who is counted a saint by the people. The Tsarevitch had put down his thoughts and the events of his life partly on the margin and the blank spaces on the pages, partly on separate leaflets either simply inserted or pasted in.

I decided to make a copy of the diary.

I will not break my word, during my lifetime and his. Nobody shall know about his notes. But they must not be irrevocably lost.

God Himself will judge between father and son. But men have slandered the Tsarevitch. Let this diary, should it ever reach posterity, accuse or justify him, in any case reveal the truth.

CHAPTER II

THE DIARY OF TSAREVITCH ALEXIS

CROWN with Thy loving kindness, O Lord, this year which now begins!

* * * * *

When on commissariat duties in Pomerania by order of the author of my being,¹ I heard that at Moscow, in the church of the Assumption, Stephen, the Metropolitan of Riazan, denounced the decree relating to delators—informers in civil and church matters—and other laws contrary to the Church, crying unto the people:—

“Be not amazed that rebellious Russia is agitated with bloody storms. How great is the gulf between the laws of man and the laws of God!”

The Senators came to the Metropolitan and accused him of spreading revolt among the people and of touching upon the Tsar’s honour. The whole incident was reported to the Tsar.

I told the Metropolitan to reconcile himself with my father as best he could. What advantage was there in their being at variance with one another? I was anxious to see a reconciliation, for if Stephen was deposed from his see, it would be difficult to find any one worthy to replace him.

Previous to this exhortation he used to write to me and I to him; not often, however, only on important affairs. But since then I have stopped the correspondence, and broken off all intercourse with him, as my father’s anger was kindled against him, and it became therefore dangerous for me to write any longer. It is rumoured he will be deposed from his see.

¹ *Note of Fräulein Arnheim:* The Tsarevitch always thus designates his father in the diary.

The Metropolitan concluded the above-mentioned sermon by praying to Saint Alexis, the Man of God, with special reference to myself, a sinner :—

“ O Saint of God ! remember thy namesake, the chosen keeper of God’s laws, thy most faithful follower, Tsarevitch Alexis Petrovitch ! Thou didst abandon thy house ; he too wanders among strangers. Thou wert bereft of slaves, subjects, friends and relatives ; so it is with him. Thou art a man of God ; he, too, is a true servant of Christ. We beseech thee, O Saint of God ! deign to protect thy namesake, our only hope, shelter him under the cover of thy wing, like a dearly beloved fledgeling, and keep him, who is the very apple of our eyes, safe from all evil.”

* * * * *

During my stay in foreign parts, where by the will of the author of my being I had to apply myself to the study of navigation, fortification, geometry, and other arts, I greatly feared to die without confession and the last rites of the church. So I have written to my chaplain, Father James, on the subject as follows :—

“ We have no priest with us, nor is there any possibility of our procuring one. I entreat your holiness to find me a priest in Moscow and send him here secretly. Make him discard all priestly insignia : shave his beard and let hair grow over his tonsure, or else shave his hair too, and wear a wig and foreign dress. Let him come under the guise of an orderly of mine. Please father do it ! Have mercy upon my soul, and let me not die without the consolation of the church. This is all I want him for in case of death, and should I live, he would be my confessor. It would be well if he were a young man, unmarried and unattached. Let his departure from Moscow be kept so secret that even his friends shall not know whither he has gone. As to the shaving of the beard, let him have no misgivings on the point ; necessity alters even such laws ; it is better to transgress in minor things than to let a soul perish without absolution. See to this without delay, and should you refrain from doing as I ask you, God may have to call you to account for my soul.”

* * * * *

On my return to Petersburg from abroad, the author of my days welcomed me graciously and inquired whether I still remembered what I had learnt? To which I replied "Yes," as if I really did; he then ordered me to bring him my drawings. But I, fearing I could not please him, if asked to draw in his presence, decided on injuring my right hand and thus disable it for use. Loading a pistol, I took it in my left hand and fired across my right palm; though the bullet did not touch my hand, yet the powder badly scorched it. The bullet embedded itself in the wall of my closet where it has remained visible even unto this day. The author of my being, noticing my burnt hand, asked how it happened. I gave a false reason.

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Chapter 7, Art. 63 of the military regulations: "Whoever makes himself ill or breaks his limbs and thus unfits himself for service is liable to have his nostrils torn, and be condemned to forced labour."

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From the laws of Tsar Alexis Michailovitch, Chapter 22, Art. 6: "And in the case of a son petitioning against his father, no judgment shall be given; but he, having been flogged for such petition, shall be delivered up to the father."

This is unjust, for though children are dependent upon their parents' will, yet they must not be treated like dumb animals. The natural law is not fulfilled by the procreation of children alone; humaneness forms also part of a father's duty.

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I hear that the author of my days hates houses being built in Moscow, for it is his will to live in Petersburg.

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It lies not with one man alone to change national customs. The country which changes its customs cannot endure. The Russian people have forgotten the water in their own cisterns, and have begun to slake their thirst with the turbid waters of strangers.

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Job, the Archimandrite of Novgorod, told me : " Evil awaits thee in Petersburg, yet I feel God will deliver thee. Thou wilt see what will happen."

* * * * *

God has so willed it with us sinners that foreigners do with us just as it pleases them. We all suffer from a mania. This fatal illness is a mad passion for foreign things and people, which has infected our whole nation. Truly says the prophet Baruch : " Let a stranger come near thee and he will destroy thee." The Germans boast and have a saying, ' he who wants to eat bread without work, let him go to Russia.' They call us barbarians and choose to reckon us among the beasts instead of men. They try to make us out before other nations as worse than dead dogs. It would be as well to stop some of these foreign antics ; they don't come natural to us and we only make a muddle in meddling with them. The foreign way becomes with us the fool's way. We degrade ourselves, our language, our nation ; and we expose ourselves to the ridicule of every one.

The intrusion of foreign languages has spoilt the purity of the Slavonic tongue. I know not what need we have to use foreign words. It must be only to make a boast of, there is little honour in doing it. Sometimes they speak in a way that neither they themselves nor others can understand.

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Sit not down under a stranger's hedgerow. Rather among nettles if they are thine own. A stranger's wit forsakes thee at the threshold. Keep thine own counsel ; thine own counsellors. Pleasant is the sound of the tambours beyond the hill ; but when brought hither they are but baskets of bast.

* * * * *

Foreigners are far beyond us, I grant you, in knowledge ; yet in natural quickness of wit our people are, thank God, not worse equipped than they, and they do wrong in railing at us. I am persuaded that God created us Russians not inferior to other human beings.

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I doubt whether it be really true that man's welfare standeth on knowledge or the sciences alone. For folk used to learn much less in the old days, and were happier than we to-day with our much learning. It is possible with much culture to be a rascal. Learning in a depraved heart is a powerful weapon for evil.

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We Russians can do without bread. We devour each other, and are satisfied.

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The boyars are great withered trees ; their massive trunks hide the people from the Tsar. My father is exceedingly intelligent ; yet Ménshikoff is always hoodwinking him.

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All administrators, whether young or old, are greedy of gain. The ancient laws have fallen into desuetude : the new ones also count for nothing. What a number are decreed ! and to what purpose ? Nothing is really changed. I don't see that much good will come of these reforms in the future.

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A sovereign's duties :

Not to trust in one's brilliancy of mind, but to be zealous to protect the people, the land and the villages, and to love, be zealous for, interested in the lesser brethren of Christ and to know their needs. Severe shall be His judgment upon the great and mighty ones ! The little shall be forgiven, but torment awaits the mighty ill-doers. This I should do well to remember, should God grant me to become Tsar.

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On St. Eustace the martyr's day we held high fête and got grievously drunk. Our faces were well pummelled ; Jibanda had a blow in the eye the Lasher lost a tooth. I don't remember anything, and I hardly know how I got away. I was exceedingly filled with the gifts of Bacchus.

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In Roshdestveno I remained at home alone. The days flowed by like water ; nothing save utter stillness.

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Time passes and brings us nearer death ; the end of our days approaches ; I recognise the frailty of my life.

I await death, but without fear or desire.

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A little drunk.

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My wife is pregnant.

Eros, Eros, heathen god ! Passions have harassed me from my youth up. I accuse others of godlessness, and am myself the most godless of all. Afrossinia ! I know my iniquity and have not redeemed myself from shame. Thy hand weighs heavily upon me, O Lord ! When shall I come and appear before God ? my tears have been my meat, day and night ; and my soul fainteth for the courts of the Lord.

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I am amazed at my father. Why does he love Theodosius ? Is it because the latter introduces Lutheran customs among the people and authorises everything ? He really is an atheist, and a deep enemy of the cross of the Lord.

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I have seldom seen so subtle a rogue. He is very adroit, he will never do wrong openly. We must be on our guard with him and be careful and stealthy in thwarting him, since we are obliged to live under his orders.

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The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up, O Lord. I am sore afraid and troubled lest Christianity perish entirely in Russia.

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Theodosius, the heresiarch, and his crew have openly begun to wage war against the Church ; they abolish fasts, they treat confession and self-immolation as nonsense ; they ridicule celibacy, self-imposed poverty, and change other strait and narrow ways of the Christian life into the smooth broad ways which lead to eternal damnation. They fearlessly teach a debauched self-indulgent life ; they recognise no sin, everything is holy, and by their teaching they have brought the children of the world into such

fearless voluptuousness, that many take up the mere Epicurean attitude: "Eat, drink, and be merry. There is no account to render after death."

They call the holy icons idols, the church singing bulls' roaring. They destroy chapels, and where the walls have remained, they allow tobacco and barbers' shops to be opened. They take miracle-working icons away on stinking dung carts under dirty mats, thus insolently defiling them before the people. In this way they attack the Orthodox faith, under the pretext that it is not Christianity, but only useless and harmful superstitions which they are trying to uproot. What a number of clergy have been destroyed, unfrocked and tortured under this pretext! If you ask for a reason, the only answer you get is: they were superstitious, bigots, sanctimonious humbugs! He who keeps fast is a bigot; he who prays, sanctimonious; he who adores the icons, invariably (they say) a hypocrite.

All this is done with such cunning, and the intention both to exterminate the Orthodox clergy in Russia, and to introduce their newly invented Lutheran and Calvinistic, priest-less sects.

He is truly mad who does not detect in them the atheistic spirit.

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The church bells have been altered, they no longer chime, but tinkle as if sounding an alarm. And everything else is changed, the icons are painted, not on wood but on canvas, after foreign models; for instance, the image of Emmanuel the Saviour is quite like a German, fat, as if conceived in the flesh; the fleshy type is preferred, the celestial nature is ignored. The churches are no longer built after the ancient style, but with pointed towers like those in Germany, and the chimes even imitate Lutheran organs.

Poor Russia! Why dost thou set thy heart on German ways and actions?

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There are to be no more monasteries; a decree is being prepared which will prohibit the taking of fresh vows; retired soldiers will fill the vacancies in the monasteries.

It is written "He who comes to me I will in no wise cast out;" but they consider the scriptures as nothing.

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As there is a military code, so now there exists a code of faith.

What sort of prayer can that be, which is enforced by a decree, under pain of punishment?

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Beggars are to taken be up, ruthlessly beaten with rods, and sent to hard labour, so that they may not eat their bread unearned. This is the Tsar's decree, while Christ says, "For I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat. I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink, I was a stranger and ye took me not in, naked and ye clothed me not. Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

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The whole of Russia is dying of spiritual famine. The sower does not scatter the seed, the earth does not receive it. The priests do not keep watch over the people who go astray. The village priest cannot be distinguished from a moujik. The moujik ploughs, the priest ploughs. And meanwhile Christians die like cattle. Drunken priests use obscene language and rail at one another within the sanctuary; they wear a pall of gold, while their bast shoes are dirty; the holy loaves are made of black rye flour; the Lord's holy host is kept in exceedingly vile vessels swarming with bugs, cockroaches, and grasshoppers. Monks have fallen into habits of tippling and stealing.

The whole monastic and priestly system calls for thorough reform, as there hardly remains a trace of the true priest and monk.

We are guilty of neither keeping our religion, such as it is, nor maintaining our clergy in decency, but of living almost like brutes. I doubt whether in Moscow one in a hundred knows what the Orthodox belief is, or who God is, or how to pray to Him, or how to fulfil His holy will.

There is no sign of Christianity left to us except the name.

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We have all lost our senses, we tremble in our faith, like a leaf on a tree ; we have gone astray in strange and diverse ways, some incline towards the Roman faith, others towards the Lutheran ; we, baptized idol-worshippers, are maimed in both legs. We have forsaken the paps of our mother Church ; we are seeking nourishment instead from all kinds of foreign and heretical sources. We are like blind puppies which have been thrown away, we err in all directions ; but where we shall finally arrive, no one knows.

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Fomka the barber, an iconoclast, has split up the image of St. Alexis the Metropolitan with his iron axe, because he did not revere the holy icons, the life-bringing cross, nor holy relics ; the holy icons, said he, and the holy cross are merely the work of man ; and he did not believe that relics brought pardon for his own transgressions. Neither did he accept the Church dogma and traditions, nor did he believe the Eucharist to be the true body of Christ, but simply bread and wine.

Stephen, the Metropolitan of Riazan, handed Fomka over to the church anathema. He was burnt at the stake in the Red Square.

Then the gentlemen of the Senate, having summoned the Metropolitan to Petersburg to account for his action, gave satisfaction to the heretics ; the iconoclast, Dmitri Tveretintoff, a physician, whose disciple Fomka had been, they pronounced innocent, while driving Stephen, the saintly bishop, with great contumely from the Judgment hall. He went out weeping and saying :—

“ O Lord Christ, our Saviour ! Thou hast said : ‘ They will persecute you, even as they persecuted me.’ Now I am driven out, but not I, it is Thou whom they are persecuting. Thou, who beholdest all things, wilt see that their judgment is unjust ; judge them Thyself ! ”

And when the prelate came out of the senate into the square, all the people were moved with compassion towards him and wept. The anger of the author of my being against Stephen has grown more intense.

* * * * *

The Church is more powerful than the Tsardom ; but nowadays the Tsar rules the Church.

The ancient Tsars bowed to the ground before the patriarch; now the occupant of the Patriarchal throne signs himself in his letters to the Tsar, thus: "Your Majesty's slave and footstool, your humble Stephen, the little Shepherd of Riazan!" The head of the Church the Tsar's footstool!

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Demetrius, the Metropolitan of Rostov, was a very saintly man; when the author of my being made him drink Hungarian wine, and began questioning him on clerical affairs, the saintly old man did not answer at all, but silently and repeatedly blessed the Tsar with the sign of the holy cross, and thus he succeeded in escaping.

The priests say, "It is impossible to swim against the stream; the whip cannot break the axe."

But the martyrs for the sake of the faith did not spare their lives!

* * * * *

The Tsar keeps his table for the bishops. "He whose bread I eat, his man I am."

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The ancient Russian prelates stood up for their country, but the prelates of to-day do not seek to obtain justice from the Tsar, but aim rather at flattering and corrupting his pious rank and power.

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If the people sin, the Tsar can divert God's wrath; if the Tsar sins, the people are helpless. God visits the sin of the monarch upon the whole country.

* * * * *

Lately at a drinking feast, the "little Shepherd of Riazan" said to my father: "You Tsars—gods on earth—are like unto the Heavenly Tsar," and the Kniaz-Pope, a drunken fool, reviled the prelate: "Though I," said he, "am but a mock patriarch, yet even I would not have spoken such words to the Tsar! God is greater than the Tsar," and the Tsar praised the buffoon for saying this.

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When in the course of the same feast, the bishops began to talk about the widowed state of the Church and the

need of a Patriarch, the author of my being in great wrath unsheathed his short sword; all were terror stricken, thinking he was going to kill them; he struck the table with the flat of the blade, and shouted: "I am the Patriarch; Tsar and Patriarch in one!"

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Theodosius is trying to persuade the author of my being to assume the title of Emperor, after the example of the ancient Roman Caesars.

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In the year 1709, during the celebrations of the Poltava victory, the clergy erected on the Red Square in Moscow an imitation of a Roman temple with an altar, consecrating it to the virtues of the Russian god Apollo and Mars, that is in honour of the author of my being, and over the ancient temple ran the inscription:—"Basis et fundamentum reipublicae, religio."

But what religion? Faith in what God, or gods?

There was also represented an "Apotheosis of the Russian Hercules," that is, the author of my days slaying many animals and peoples, and, at the end of these feats, being borne up to heaven in Jove's chariot, drawn by eagles along the Milky Way, with the inscription:—"Viamque affectat Olympo."

In the pamphlet, written by the archmonk Joseph, the Prefect of the Academy, the Apotheosis is described in the following words: "It should be known that this is neither a church, nor a sanctuary built to a saint, but a political or civil ceremony."

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Theodosius is trying to persuade my father to insert in the decree, which ordained the holy Synod, or in the Russian oath of allegiance itself, words declaring that, "The people should honour their ruler's name as head and father of their country equally with the name of Jesus Christ."

* * * * *

Men want to usurp God's glory and the honour due to Christ, the Eternal and only King of kings. It is in the Roman Laws that these impious sacrilegious words are

found: "The Roman autocrat is the Lord of the Universe."

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We confess and believe that Christ alone is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and there is no man Lord beside him.

Jesus Christ, the wondrous Rock, struck and destroyed the Roman Empire and smashed its feet of clay. And we create and build up what God has shattered. Does not this mean that we defy God?

* * * * *

Look at Roman History. The Emperor Caligula saith: Everything is allowed to Cæsar, "Omnia licent." *Not only to Roman Emperors, but nowadays to all knaves and servile creatures and quadrupeds, is everything permitted!*

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Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon saith, "I am God," and he became a beast.

* * * * *

On Basil Island, in the house of the Tsaritsa Prascovie, there lives an old monk, Timothy Arkhípich, he is the refuge of the desperate, the hope of the hopeless, a mad man in the eyes of the world, yet he is intimately acquainted with the griefs and hearts of men. I went over to see him a few nights ago and had a talk with him. Arkhípich says Antichrist is a pretender—a veritable cursed one—and that he is on his way. I read the Metropolitan of Riazan's *Signs of the Coming of Antichrist*, and a great fear thereupon possessed me.

In Moscow, Gregory of Talitsa was burnt because he spoke to the people about the coming of Antichrist. Talitsa was a man of great intelligence. Basil Levin, a captain of the Dragoons who was with me on my way from Lvoff to Kiev in 1711, the priest Lebedka, chaplain to Prince Ménshikoff the clerk Larion Dokoukin, and many others think in the same way about Antichrist.

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A Raskolnik spilt Christ's sacrament and trampled it under foot.

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Near Lubetch a flight of locusts appeared ; from midday to midnight it was passing—"God's Wrath," the superscription on their wings.

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The days are short and gloomy ; old people say the sun shines no longer as it used to.

* * * * *

I was drunk ; we drank a large quantity of vodka. The Lord knows it is fear which makes us drink, in order to forget ourselves.

* * * * *

The fear of death has come upon me. The end is at hand, the axe is at the root, death's scythe is over our heads.

* * * * *

Lord, help Russia ! Thrice-pure Mother of God protect and intercede for us !

* * * * *

O martyrs of these latter days, Christ is about to rise again ! Christ is, and will dwell within you, and you will say, Amen ! to His Kingdom.

CHAPTER III

THE DIARY OF FRÄULEIN ARNHEIM

WITH these words the diary of Tsarevitch Alexis closed. I was present when he threw it into the fire.

December 31.

To-day died the last Russian Tsaritsa, Marfa Matveevna, the widow of Peter's step-brother, Fédor Alexeitch. At foreign courts she had been considered dead long ago ; ever since her husband's death, during thirty-two years, she had lived half mad, a prisoner in her rooms, and never showed herself to anybody.

She was buried at dusk with great pomp. The funeral procession moved between two rows of torches planted in the ice all the way along from her house, (she lived next to us near the Church of All the Sorrowing) up to the Peter and Paul Cathedral, across the Neva on the ice. It was the same way along which her Highness's body had been borne two months or more ago in the frigate of death. Then the first foreign Princess was buried, now the last Russian Tsaritsa.

First came the clergy in gorgeous palls, carrying candles and incense burners, chanting funeral songs. The coffin was drawn on sleighs. Behind it walked the Privy Councillor Tolstoi carrying a crown set with priceless gems.

The Tsar had for the first time at this funeral prohibited the ancient Russian custom of wailing ; it was strictly ordered that none should cry aloud.

All moved along in silence, the night was still, nothing was heard but the crackling of the burning resin, the crunching of steps on the snow, and the funeral chanting.

This silent procession aroused a shudder of terror. It seemed as though we were gliding along the ice after the dead, ourselves also dead, into the black eternal gloom.

With this old Tsaritsa New Russia seemed to be burying Old Russia, and Petersburg burying Moscow.

The Tsarevitch, who had loved the deceased as his own mother, was terribly upset by this death. He sees in it a bad omen for himself, his own fate. Several times during the ceremony he whispered to me, "The end has come, the end of everything!"

January 1.

To-morrow morning I leave Petersburg, together with the two Barons Loewenwold for Riga, and then travel through Danzig into Germany. This is my last night in the Tsarevitch's house.

This evening I went to bid him good-bye; the way we parted made me feel how much I love him, and that I will never forget him.

"Who knows," said he, "we may meet again. I would like to pay another visit to Germany and other foreign countries; I liked those parts, you live in gaiety and light and freedom."

"What holds your Highness back?"

He sighed heavily.

"I would like to go to heaven; it is my sins which keep me back." And then he added with his genuine childlike smile, "The Lord keep you, Fräulein Juliana, do not remember my worst; greet the European countries for me, and your old friend Leibnitz. May be he will prove to be in the right, and that we shall, with God's help, not eat, but serve one another."

He embraced and kissed my forehead with brotherly tenderness.

I could not help crying. Once more I turned round and had a last look at him, and again my heart sank with a presentiment, just as on that day when I saw in the dark, and as it were prophetic mirror, the face of Charlotte and Alexis, when both had seemed to me to be victims doomed to some great suffering. She had perished, now his turn had come. And then I recalled him as he stood the last day in Roshdestveno, on the dove-cote, high up over the

sullen wood against the blood-red sky, as it were wrapt in the white doves' wings. So he will ever remain in my memory.

* * * * *

I hear that prisoners set free sometimes regret their prison. I experience a kindred feeling at the present moment with regard to Russia. I began this diary with curses. I cannot close it with blessings. I will only say, what probably many in Europe would say, were they better acquainted with Russia—"A mysterious country—a mysterious people."

Book IV

THE FLOOD

CHAPTER I

THE Tsar had been warned, when he contemplated building Petersburg, that the site was not suitable for habitation, on account of the floods ; twelve years previously the whole country up to Nienshantz had been under water, and similar disasters recurred about every five years. The original inhabitants of the Neva Delta did not erect permanent houses, but only small huts. Whenever a great flood, by one sign or another, seemed to be threatened, they were taken to pieces, the logs and planks were tied together in a raft and fastened to trees, while the people themselves sought refuge on the hill Dooderhof. But to Peter, the new city seemed a " Paradise " just because of the abundance of water which, like a waterfowl, he loved ; and he hoped that in this place, quicker than anywhere else, he could accustom his subjects to a sea-faring life.

At the end of October 1715, the Neva began to freeze, snow fell, the sleighs were brought out and everybody was expecting an early, settled winter. But quite unexpectedly the weather changed ; it became warm again. In one night all the snow and ice had melted. The wind brought a fog from the sea, a putrid, yellow, suffocating mist, which caused much sickness among the people.

" I pray God to deliver me from this place of perdition," wrote an old boyar to Moscow. " I am seriously afraid of falling ill ; since the thaw began we have been enveloped in such a balmy scent and such gloom, that it is impossible

to go out. Many die because of the infectious air in this 'Paradise.' "

The south-west wind continued to blow for nine days ; the water in the Neva rose ; several times it began to overflow. Peter issued decrees by which the inhabitants were bidden to empty their cellars of all goods, to keep boats in readiness and to drive the cattle on to the higher ground.

But the water after mounting, receded every time. The Tsar, noticing that his decrees only troubled the people, and having come to the conclusion, by signs known only to himself, that there would be no great flood, resolved to trouble himself no more about the rise of the water.

The first fashionable winter " Assembly " was fixed on November 6, in the house of Fédor Apraksin, President of the Admiralty. The house was situated on the quay opposite to the Admiralty buildings, and next to the Winter Palace. On the eve of the Assembly the water rose again. People of experience predicted that this time the calamity could not be escaped, and various signs were quoted in support of this belief ; the cockroaches in the palace had begun to creep from the cellars up to the garret ; the mice had left the flour stores ; the Tsaritsa had dreamt that Petersburg had become a prey to the flames, and fire in a dream means flood. Not quite recovered from her confinement, she could not accompany Peter to the " Assembly, " and entreated him to stay at home.

Peter read in the looks of all that ancient dread of water, which all his life he had vainly sought to overcome : " the sea brings sadness and grief—where water is there is grief also—even the Tsar cannot appease a flood."

He was warned on all sides. At last he was so annoyed that he forbade even the mentioning of a flood. He all but struck the Chief Constable Devière with his club. An unknown peasant had terrified the whole town by predicting that the water would rise above the high elm which grew on the quay near the Trinity Church. Peter ordered the elm tree to be felled and the peasant to be flogged on the site ; during the performance a drum was to be beaten and a persuasive exhortation addressed to the people.

Before the " Assembly " commenced, Apraksin came to the Tsar asking permission to have it in the house itself, and

not in the pavilion generally used on such occasions, which stood out in the courtyard and was connected with the main building only by a narrow glazed gallery, far from safe in case of a sudden rise of water, when the guests might easily be cut off from the staircase which led out to the upper rooms. Peter thought it over, yet decided to have his own way, and ordered the "Assembly" to be held in its usual quarter, the pavilion.

"An Assembly," the decree explained, "is a free gathering not only for pleasure but for work.

"The host is neither obliged to receive his guests nor to see them to the door when they depart, nor is he expected to press them to eat.

"At the 'Assembly' people are free to sit, walk about, or join in the games and no one has a right to interfere, or check another's actions; ceremonies, such as rising up to greet, conducting to the door, are forbidden under penalty of the fine of the 'Great Eagle.'"

Both the supper-room and the room for dancing were spacious, but with exceedingly low ceilings; the walls of the former were covered with blue tiles, after the style of Dutch kitchens, pewter dishes were ranged along the shelves, the brick floor was strewn with sand, the large tiled stove was overheated. One of the three long tables was spread with cold savoury dishes, Peter's favourite oysters, pickled sprats, lemons; on another table, chess and draught boards were laid; on a third packets of tobacco, baskets with clay pipes and piles of wooden splinters for pipe-lighters.

Tallow candles were faintly glimmering through the clouds of smoke. The low room, packed with people, reminded one of a skipper's saloon in Plymouth or Rotterdam. The similarity was accentuated by a number of English and Dutch ship captains. Their wives, fat, smooth, glossy, with red cheeks, their feet tucked in fur warmers, knitted stockings, chatted and evidently felt quite at home.

Peter, smoking a short clay pipe, sipping mulled ale mixed with cognac, sugar and lemon juice, was playing chess with the Archimandrite Theodosius.

Anton Devière, the Chief Constable, timidly approached the Tsar like a guilty dog. It was difficult to decide whether

he was a Jew or a Portuguese ; his feminine face expressed that combination of sweetness and weakness found sometimes amongst southern faces.

"Your Majesty, the water is rising."

"How much?"

"Two feet nine inches."

"And the wind?"

"West south-west."

"Nonsense, I myself have just registered it, South-west south."

"It has changed," replied Devière apologetically, as if he were responsible for the direction of the wind.

"Never mind," said Peter decidedly, "the water will soon fall. The barometer points to fair; it won't deceive, never fear."

He believed in the infallibility of the barometer as he did in that of mechanics in general.

"Your Majesty, is there no order?" Devière asked plaintively. "Otherwise I really don't know what to do. People are getting exceedingly frightened. Intelligent experts say——"

The Tsar closely eyed him.

"One of these intelligent experts I have had flogged near Trinity Church ; and you too won't escape, unless you give up talking nonsense. Go, fool!"

Devière, shrinking yet more, like the affectionate dog, Lizette, at the sight of a stick, instantly disappeared.

"What is your opinion about this extraordinary ringing, Father?" Peter turned to Theodosius, continuing their conversation about the Novgorod church bells which, according to recent information, were tolling miraculously at night : the rumour spread that this was a foreboding of great calamities.

Theodosius stroked his thin beard, played with the double-faced panagia, adorned with the crucifix and the Tsar's portrait, cast a side glance at the Tsarevitch Alexis, who was sitting next to them, blinked with one eye as if taking aim, and suddenly his diminutive face, like the snout of a bat, lit up with rarest subtlety :—

"Anybody can understand the meaning of this speechless droning. It obviously comes from the fiend ; Satan

is sobbing because his reign over the Russian people is coming to an end ; he is cast out from the possessed, the Raskolniks, the monks, the old hypocrites, whom your Majesty has taken great pains to cure."

And Theodosius led the conversation to his favourite topic, the uselessness of the monks.

"Monks are parasites. They escape taxation in order to eat the bread of idleness. What gain are they to society ? They count their civil position for nothing, describing it as part of the vanities of the world. They have a saying to this effect :—'He who becomes a monk no longer works for the Tsar of earth, but for the Tsar of heaven. They lead an animal life in the deserts, They seem incapable of realizing that the Russian climate makes a real hermit life impossible.'"

Alexis understood that this talk about hypocrites was aimed at him.

He rose. Peter looked at him and said, "Stay where you are!"

The Tsarevitch submissively returned to his seat, casting down his eyes, as he felt, with the air of a hypocrite.

Theodosius was in his best vein. Stimulated by the attention of the Tsar, who had brought out his notebook and was taking notes for future decrees, he suggested measure after measure, ostensibly for the reform, but to Alexis it seemed for the destruction, of monasticism in Russia.

"Establish in the monasteries regulation hospitals for discharged dragoons, also schools for arithmetic, geometry ; in the convents foundling institutions for illegitimate children ; the nuns should be employed in weaving."

The Tsarevitch did his best not to hear ; yet stray words would reach him like authoritative commands.

"The sale of mead and oil in churches must be finally forbidden, the burning of tapers before icons placed outside the churches must be stopped. Chapels must be closed up ; no new relics to be announced. Mendicants to be taken into custody and relentlessly beaten with rods ; no miracles to be invented."

The wind rattled at the window shutters ; a draught passed through the room, and the candles flickered. A countless host of enemies seemed to be besieging and breaking

into the house ; and in the words of Theodosius, Alexis felt the same inimical force.

It was the attack of a storm from the west.

The walls of the dancing-room were hung with woven tapestry and pier glasses ; chandeliers with wax candles supplied the light. Musicians with deafening wind instruments were placed on a small platform. The ceiling, with its allegorical representation of " A journey to the Isle of Love," was so low that the naked Cupids with their fat calves and legs were almost brushed by the wigs of the dancers.

The ladies in the intervals between the dances sat as if dumb ; they seemed dull and stupefied ; in dancing, they hopped round like wax figures ; they answered all questions in monosyllables, and were quite scared by compliments. Daughters seemed tied to their mother's skirts ; while the mother's faces clearly expressed : we would rather our daughters were drowned than here.

William Mons was repeating a compliment, culled from a German book of *savoir-faire*, to that same Nastenka, who was in love with a naval officer and had been crying over a tender missive at the Venus Festival in the Summer Garden.

" Through repeatedly meeting you, fair angel, such a desire to know you better has arisen within me, that, unable to conceal it any longer, I am compelled to lay it deferentially before you. I heartily wish that you, my lady, might have found in me a person whose habits and agreeable conversation could satisfy you ; a person whose behaviour and conversation might not displease you ; but since nature has given me no advantages, deign to accept instead my devoted faithfulness and service !"

Nastenka was not listening. The buzz of monotonously sounding words had made her sleepy ; later on, she complained to her aunt, that though her partner seemed to speak Russian, yet with the best intention she could not make out a single word.

The Secretary to the French Ambassador, George Proscourov, son of a Moscow clerk, who had lived for some time in Paris, and had become there a " Monsieur George," a perfect " petit maître " and " galant homme," was singing

to the ladies a modern ditty about the coiffeur Frison, and the street-girl, Dodun :

La Dodun dit à Frison :
Coiffez-moi avec adresse.
Je prétends avec raison
Inspirer de la tendresse.
Tignonnez, tignonnez, bichonnez-moi !

He also recited a Russian poem on the charms of life in Paris.

O beautiful city on flowing Seine
The gods have chosen thy fair domain.
The manners of boors are driven out hence
By thy most exquisite influence,
And never shall I in my soul forget
The town that I leave with such deep regret !

The old Moscow boyars, hostile to the new customs, sat a little way off, warming themselves near the stove, holding converse with one another in allusions and riddles.

“ What do you think, my lord, of life in Petersburg, eh ? ”

“ To the devil with you and your Petersburg life ! These compliments and reverences and obeisances of the woman-folk, and the foreign food, make one’s head go round ! ”

“ What’s to be done, friend, but bear it ? One cannot leap into heaven, nor bury oneself in the earth. Patience, patience ! ”

Mons was whispering into Nastenka’s ears a newly composed ditty :

Without love and passion,
All days are dreary.
Love sighs acquaint us
With all life’s sweetness.
What, say, is life for,
If one loves not ?

Suddenly, it seemed to her that the ceiling was shaking and that the naked Cupids were falling upon her head. She cried out ; William Mons reassured her ; it was only the wind bulging out like a sail the canvas of the picture nailed to the ceiling.

Again the shutters rattled, this time with such force that everybody looked round in terror.

The polonaise began ; the couples set out and music drowned the noise of the storm. Only the shivering old nobles, warming themselves round the stove, listened to the howling of the wind in the chimney, and whispered to one another, sighing and shaking their heads. They seemed to hear in the sounds of the storm, rendered more ill-omened still by the music, the old words : " out of the sea sorrow, out of the water, grief ! "

Peter continued his conversation with Theodosius ; he asked him about the heresy of the Moscow iconoclasts, Fomka the barber and Dmitri the physician. Both heretics, in propagating their teaching, had referred to the Tsar's recent decrees : " Thanks be to God, nowadays in Moscovy everybody is free to follow what faith he chooses. "

" According to their teaching, " continued Theodosius, with a smile which made it impossible to infer whether he disagreed or sympathised with the heresy, " the true faith is founded on the Scriptures and good works, and not on miracles and traditions. "

" People of any creed can be saved according to the apostle's word : ' In every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him. ' "

" Very reasonable, " remarked Peter and the monk's smile seemed to be reflected on the Tsar's face ; they understood one another without words.

" And the icons, " continued Theodosius, " being but man's work, according to their teaching are idols. How can painted boards work miracles ? You throw them into the fire, they burn just like ordinary wood. It is not the icons but God, who should be worshipped. And who gave the saints ears so long as to enable them to hear the prayers said on earth ? If, say they, a son is slain by a stick or a knife, how can the slain man's father love that knife or stick ? In the same way how can God love the wood on which His Son had been crucified ? And the Virgin, they ask, why should she be honoured ? She is like a plain bag filled with precious stones and pearls. When the bag is emptied of its treasure what value or honour remain to it ? About the Eucharist, too, they use

sophisms : how can Christ be broken up, distributed and eaten at the services of which such numbers are held all over the world on the same day ? How can the prayers of priests change bread into our Lord's body, especially as there are all sorts of men among priests : drunkards, sybarites and veritable scoundrels. This is highly improbable and we very much doubt it. The bread smells bread to us, and the blood, so far as our senses can ascertain, is but red wine."

"It is not right for us Orthodox even to listen to such heresy," the Tsar checked Theodosius.

The latter stopped short, yet his smile seemed to grow only more insolent and more malignant.

The Tsarevitch raised his eyes and furtively glanced at his father. He seemed to notice confusion in Peter's look. The Tsar no longer smiled ; his face had grown serious, almost wrathful, yet at the same time helpless and perplexed. Had he not a moment ago recognized the basis of heresy as being reasonable ? Accepting the basis how can he regret the inferences ? It is easy to forbid, but how refute ? The Tsar is clever, yet is not his cleverness exceeded by that of the monk ; was not the latter leading the Tsar, as an evil guide leads a blind man, straight towards a precipice ?

Thus thought Alexis ; and the subtle smile of Theodosius found reflection no longer on the father's but on the son's face. Now they too understood one another without words.

"There is nothing to be wondered at in Fomka and Dmitri," said Avrámoff, breaking the awkward silence.

"'The music sways the dance.' The sheep do but follow the shepherd." He steadily eyed Theodosius ; the same took the hint and quivered with rage.

At this moment some immeasurable force hurled itself against the shutters, as if a thousand fists were beating at them. This something hissed, howled, wailed, and then died slowly away in the distance. Then the assailants seemed to return more and more formidably to the attack, and to be breaking into the house.

Devière ran out every ten minutes to learn about the rise of the water. The news was bad, the Mia and Fontanna were already in flood. The town was panic-stricken.

Devière lost his head ; several times he approached the Tsar, trying to catch his eye and attract his notice, but Peter, engrossed in conversation, did not pay any attention to him. At last, no longer able to restrain himself, with desperate resolution he stooped and stuttered in the Tsar's ear :—

“ Your Majesty !—the water ! ”

Peter without a word of warning, with a quick, almost involuntary movement, gave him a slap in the face. Devière felt neither shame nor insult, nothing except the pain, so used was he to such treatment.

“ It is a privilege,” said Peter's eaglets “ to be struck by a monarch whose blows are favours.”

Peter with a calm countenance, as though nothing whatever had happened, turned to Avrámoff and asked him the reason why the publication of the astronomer Huyghen's work, *Contemplation or Description of Heavenly and Earthly Bodies*, had been delayed so long.

For a moment Avrámoff was taken aback, but he instantly recovered and looking straight into the Tsar's eyes he said with firmness :—

“ That book is exceedingly blasphemous ; it has been written, not with ink but with hellish charcoal, and therefore it is only fit to be burnt.”

“ What does the blasphemy consist of ? ”

“ The rotation of the earth round the sun is asserted, as well as the existence of a plurality of worlds, and all those worlds are supposed to be like ours, with human beings, meadows, fields, woods, animals, and everything else just as we have it. And in this sly and subtle way the author tries to glorify and establish Nature (which means self-existent life), while a God-Creator is dispensed with.”

A discussion began : the Tsar began proving that Copernicus' Chart of the universe explained in a natural and suitable way all the life of the planets.

Under the protection of the Tsar and Copernicus more and more daring thoughts were expressed.

“ To-day all philosophy can be reduced to mechanics,” suddenly declared the naval councillor, Alexander Kikin. “ The universe is believed to be a clock on a large scale ; everything acts in it by fixed motions, which depend on a

perfect arrangement of the automaton. The same mechanism pervades the whole ——”

“A senseless atheistical philosophy, a corrupt and unstable basis of reasoning,” exclaimed the terrified Avramoff; but nobody listened to him.

Each tried to outdo the other in learning.

“The ancient philosopher Dicaearchus taught that man’s being is in his body, and that the word ‘soul’ is only an accidental meaningless term,” added the vice-chancellor Shafiroff.

“The microscope has revealed in man’s seed animals very much like frogs or tadpoles,” said Monsieur George with such a mischievous smile, that it was obvious he meant to say there cannot be such a thing as a soul. After the manner of all Parisian dandies, he had his own “Petite Philosophie,” in expounding which he displayed the same polite frivolity as when singing the coiffeur’s song: ‘Tignon-nez, tignon-nez, bichonnez moi.’

“According to Leibnitz we are but thinking hydraulic machines: the oyster is far behind us in reasoning capacity.”

“Not far behind you,” somebody remarked; but Monsieur George continued imperturbably:

“The oyster is far behind us in reasoning capacity. Its life is, so to speak, limited to its shell, and hence it stands in no need of the five senses. It is possible that creatures in other worlds possessing ten or more senses are infinitely superior to us; that Newton and Leibnitz excite no more wonder among them than the ape or spider among us.”

The Tsarevitch was listening, and it seemed to him, that this conversation acted on his ideas, just as the Petersburg thaw on the snow in spring; everything was unraveling, drifting, melting, growing rotten; everything was changing into mud and mire under the influence of the baleful western wind. Doubt in all things, negation of all things, without regard, without reservation, rose like the Neva, which, swollen by the wind, was threatening an inundation.

“Enough of this idle talk,” concluded Peter rising. “He who denies God is either mad or a fool. He, who has eyes, ought to discern God in His creations. Deniers of God bring shame to the country and must not be tolerated,

for they undermine the basis of law upon which rest vows and the oath of allegiance."

"The cause of lawlessness," interposed Theodosius, unwilling to miss an opportunity, "is rather to be sought in hypocritical zeal than in atheism; atheists themselves insist that God should be taught to the masses, else, say they, the people will revolt against authority."

The whole building was now continuously shaking under the pressure of the storm. Yet nobody noticed the sounds, they had grown used to them; the Tsar's face was calm, and his appearance reassured the others.

Somebody spread the report that the wind had changed round, and that there was hope that the waters would abate.

"You see," said Peter, and his face grew bright, "there was no reason to get frightened. Never fear, the barometer will not lie!"

He went into the next room and joined the dancers.

When the Tsar was merry, he infected every one else with his merriment. In dancing he stamped, jumped and performed various feats with such enthusiasm that the most indolent were eager to join in.

In the English country dance the lady of each first pair invented a new figure. The Princess Tsherkasski kissed her partner Peter Tolstoi and pulled his wig over his nose, the rest of the ladies did likewise, while the gentlemen had to stand motionless as logs. A general scramble, laughing, all sorts of nonsense ensued, all were merry as school children and Peter was the merriest of all.

Only the old princes continued to sit in their corner listening to the howling of the wind. They whispered, sighed, and shook their heads.

One of them remembered a passage in the Holy Fathers against dancing; "The twirling dances of women alienate people from God and hurl them into the depths of Hell. Laughter will be turned into mourning; dancers will be hung up by their navels."

The Tsar came up to the old men and invited them to join the dance. Vain were their refusals, the plea of their inability and of various ailments, rheumatism, asthma, gout; the Tsar would take no excuse.

A solemn, quaint "Grossvater" was played; the spright-

liest young ladies were purposely chosen as partners for the old men, who at first hardly moved, stumbled, and muddled both themselves and others ; yet when the Tsar threatened them with a glass of that terrible pepper brandy, they jumped about as lively as the younger ones ; they paid for it, however, at the end of the dance, when they fell back on their seats half dead with fatigue, groaning, puffing, and sighing.

They had hardly time to recover when the Tsar began a new dance more intricate even than the first, known as the "Chain dance ;" thirty pairs, all tied together with handchiefs followed a fiddler, a small hunchback who went skipping along in front of them.

The dancers first went round the two rooms of the wing, then across the gallery they entered the main building ; all over the house, from room to room, from staircase to staircase the saraband swept along, shrieking and laughing. The hunchback led the way, fiddling and leaping frantically, making faces as though some evil spirit possessed him. He was followed by the Tsar and his partner, the rest following after ; as though the Tsar were leading the captives while he himself, the giant, was led and twirled along by the caprices of the little demon.

On their way back to the pavilion they saw people running towards them across the gallery waving their hands in terror and crying :—

"The water, the water, the water !"

The couples in front stopped short, but they were crushed by those running up from behind ; a general confusion ensued.

They were hurled against one another, knocked down, dragging and tearing at the handkerchiefs, which bound them to one another, to undo them. The men swore, the ladies screamed ; the chain was broken. A larger number headed by the Tsar hurried back through the gallery into the main building. A smaller number, those who were in front and in consequence nearer the wing, tried to follow, but before they had time to reach even the middle of the gallery, the shutter at one of the windows cracked, quivered and fell, sending the window pane in shivers ; a stream of turbulent water rushed in after it. At the same time im-

prisoned air in the cellar below pressing against the floor began raising and bulging, and finally burst the floor up with a crash and rumble like the firing of cannon.

Peter called out from the other end of the gallery to those who were cut off :—

“Go back to the pavilion ! Don’t be afraid, I will send boats.”

The words did not reach them, yet they understood his signs, and stood still.

Only two went on running along the flooded floor of the corridor. Theodosius was one of them. He had nearly reached the end where Peter stood waiting for him, when suddenly a plank gave way. Theodosius the monk fell through and began to sink. The other, a fat woman, the wife of a Dutch captain, picking up her skirts jumped over the monk’s head, red stockings flashed above his black hood. The Tsar hurried to the rescue of Theodosius, seized him by the shoulder, pulled him out and carried him in his arms like a little child. Theodosius was shivering and dripping all over. The wide black sleeves of his mantle running with water made him look like a wet bat. The hunchback fiddler too, on reaching the middle of the gallery, had disappeared in the water ; he came to the surface again, tried to swim, but at that moment the middle of the ceiling gave way, came down with a crash, and buried him.

Then the few who were left, numbering about ten, seeing they were entirely cut off by water from the main building, hurried back into the wing, their last refuge. But here, too, the water was fast gaining ground. The waves were beating just below the windows, the shutters creaked, cracked and threatened any moment to be torn off their hinges.

The water came in through the broken window panes and the cracks ; it oozed, gushed and gurgled down the walls, forming pools, flooding the floor.

All lost their heads, save Tolstoi and Wilim Ivanovitch Mons, who with presence of mind searched for another exit ; they discovered a small door hidden by hangings ; it opened upon a staircase which led to the garret. All rushed towards it. Even the gallantest cavaliers, now that death stared them in the face, neglected, even jostled, the ladies ; each thought only of himself.

It was dark in the garret. Groping their way among beams, planks, empty barrels and cases, they reached the furthestmost corner partly protected from the wind by a prominent chimney, which was still warm ; they huddled close to it and for some time remained in the dark, flurried and stupefied by fear. The ladies in ball-dresses had their teeth chattering with cold.

At last Mons decided to go down and find help.

Downstairs the grooms, up to their knees in water, were leading into the room their master's horses, which they had just saved from drowning in the stables. The Assembly Room was changed into a stable, the mirrors reflected the heads of horses ; rags of canvas painted with the journey to the " Isle of Love " were hanging down from the ceiling ; the naked Cupids bulged in mortal anguish. Mons gave money to the grooms, and they procured him a lantern, a bottle of brandy and several sheepskins. They told him there was no way out of the wing ; the gallery was shattered, the yard flooded, they themselves were obliged to seek refuge in the garret. The promised boats never arrived ; it turned out afterwards that those sent by the Tsar were unable to get near the wing ; the courtyard was surrounded by a high fence and the only gateway was filled up by the debris of a shattered building. Mons returned to his companions in the garret ; the light of the lantern seemed to give them a little courage ; the men drank some of the brandy, the women wrapped themselves in the sheepskins.

The night seemed endless ; the whole house was trembling under the pressure of the waves, like a rotten vessel on the brink of destruction. Overhead the storm tore off the tiles from the roof ; now rushing past with furious howls and stamping like a herd of wild beasts, now with piercing hiss and rustle like a flock of gigantic birds ; at times it seemed as if the wind would tear off the roof itself and blow them all away. In the voice of the storm they seemed to hear the cries of the drowning ; they expected the whole town would disappear at any moment.

One of the ladies, the wife of the Danish resident, who was with child, was suddenly seized by violent pains and screamed most piteously ; a premature delivery was feared.

George Proskóurov kept praying : " Holy Father Nicholas, St. Sergius have mercy upon us ! " It was difficult to recognize in him the free-thinker who had been expounding the non-existence of the soul. Michael Avrámoff was also quaking with fear, yet seemed to rejoice at the misfortune which had befallen them.

" How argue with God ? His wrath is just. This town will be destroyed from the face of the earth like Sodom and Gomorrah : ' And God looked upon the earth and behold it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon earth. And God said : *The end of all flesh is come before me. And behold I will bring a flood of water on the earth and destroy all flesh wherein is breath of life from under heaven.*' "

Listening to these prophecies the refugees felt a new, hitherto unexperienced terror, as if the end of the world, the day of judgment were at hand.

A glow of fire flashed in the black sky ; the sound of a clashing bell was heard through the noise of the storm ; it was the alarm bell : the grooms said that in the Admiralty dockyards close by, the workmen's dwellings and the rope and cable stores were on fire. Notwithstanding the abundance of water the fire was especially dangerous in this high wind ; burning logs were blown about, and the whole city threatened to blaze up any moment. Petersburg was perishing from these two elements : fire and water ; the prophecies were being fulfilled, Petersburg was doomed.

Towards dawn the storm subsided ; in the grey transparency of the dim light the gentlemen in wigs, covered with dust and cobwebs, the ladies in " robes-rondes " and hooped skirts after the Versailles fashion, wrapped in sheepskins, their faces blue with the cold, appeared like spectres to each other.

Mons looked out of the garret window and saw in place of a town, a limitless lake. This lake was agitated not only on the surface but seemed to boil, seethe, and bubble up from the very bottom like water in a kettle over a hot fire. This lake was the Neva, variegated like the skin of a serpent's belly, yellow, purple, black, but patched with white foam ; wearied, yet angry, under the terrible, low, leaden sky, grey as the expanse below. Wrecks of barges, overturned boats, logs, planks, roofs, the skeletons of com-

plete houses, carcasses of animals—all these were floating slowly past on its waves.

Melancholy were the traces of human life in the midst of this triumphant element; here and there above the water peered the towers, spires, domes and roofs of flooded houses.

Mons perceived at a distance, opposite to the Peter and Paul fortress, a number of rowing galleys and boyers; he took up a long pole, one of those used for scaring pigeons, fixed Nastenka's red silk neckerchief to it, pushed it through the window and began to wave, making signs to attract attention. One of the boats left the rest and coming straight across the Neva, approached the Assembly Room pavilion.

Peter had worked without a break all the night through, rescuing people from water and flames like a common fireman; his hair was singed; he narrowly escaped being crushed by a beam; while helping to rescue the chattels of poor people, who lived in cellar dwellings, he stood up to his waist in water and was chilled to the bone; he suffered with all and cheered all; wherever the Tsar appeared the work was done so heartily that both water and flames receded. The Tsarevitch was in a boat with his father, but whenever he ventured to offer help, Peter refused as if in disdain.

When the fire was quenched and the water began to subside the Tsar remembered it was time to go home to his wife, who had probably spent the night in great anxiety about her husband. On his way back he could not resist the desire to go round by the Summer Garden, and see what damage the flood had done there.

The pavilion projecting over the Neva was partially ruined, but the statue of Venus had remained whole. The pedestal was submerged, so that the Goddess, the Foamborn, seemed to be again rising from the waves; not the blue, tender waves of old, but the lurid, dark, waves, heavy as though leaden, of the Styx.

At the foot of the statue a black speck was visible. Peter looked through the telescope and found it was a man. By order of the Tsar a sentinel watched night and day at this precious statue. Caught by the waters, not daring to leave

his post, he had climbed up the pedestal of Venus and huddled himself close to her feet, embracing them ; and thus he had probably spent the whole night, starved with cold, half dead with fatigue.

The Tsar hastened to his rescue. Standing at the rudder, he steered the boyer against current and wind. Suddenly an enormous wave seized the side of the boat, swept over them showering them with spray and making the craft heel over to such an extent that it threatened to capsize. But Peter was an experienced helmsman. Setting his feet against the stern, leaning with all his weight on the rudder, he overcame the danger, and steered steadily towards his goal.

The Tsarevitch glanced at his father and suddenly, for some reason or other, he remembered what his teacher Viasemsky had once told him when drunk :—

“Theodosius is wont to sing with the choristers before your father : where God wills it the order of nature is conquered, and such like psalm verses. They sing them to flatter your father, and he rejoices to be compared unto God, forgetting that not only God but the devil also has power over the elements ; there are such things as demon miracles.”

Clad in a plain sailor's jacket, with high leather boots and waving hair—his hat had been carried off by the wind—the gigantic helmsman looked at the flooded city, his face, calm and firm, like sculptured stone, expressed neither confusion, fear, nor pity. There was something superhuman in this man. Like fate he held in his power men and elements. Men would bow before him, the wind would abate, the water would subside, and again the city would stand where he ordained it should be. “The order of nature is conquered, when he wills it.”

“Whose will,” the Tsarevitch asked himself, not daring to reply, “God's, or the devil's ?”

A few days later, when the usual aspect of Petersburg had well nigh obliterated all traces of the flood, Peter wrote in a jovial letter to one of his eaglets :

“Last week, the west-south-west wind beat up such a flood, as, they say, had never happened before. In my

apartments water stood twenty-one inches high, while in the garden and on the opposite shore it was high enough to boat on. It was very amusing to see people, men and women, perched on roofs and trees as on Ararat at the Great Flood. The water though high, didn't do much damage."

The letter was dated from "Paradise."

CHAPTER II

PETER fell ill. He had caught cold during the flood when, in rescuing the poor people's chattels from the cellar dwellings, he had stood waist-deep in water. At first he paid no heed to his illness, and tried to get over it by ignoring it, but on November 15, he was obliged to take to his bed and the Court Physician, Blumentrost, declared that the Tsar's life was in danger.

These days were to decide the fate of Alexis. On October 28, the day of Alexis' wife's funeral, on their return from the Peter and Paul Cathedral, Peter gave him a letter, "a declaration to my son," which demanded immediate reform on the threat of severe anger and the loss of the crown.

"I am at a loss to know what to do," the Tsarevitch kept saying to his friends; "Am I to become a beggar and hide myself amongst outcasts for the time being, or shall I retreat to some monastery; or shall I seek refuge in some country where fugitives are safe?"

"Become a monk," urged Kikin, an old confidant of Alexis. "The monk's hood is not nailed on his head; it will come off again; and meanwhile you will at least have peace."

"I have rescued you from your father's axe," declared Prince Basil Dolgorouki. "Be of good cheer, there is nothing left for you to worry about. Write a thousand letters of resignation—of renunciation of the crown—if necessary. Time is with us. The old proverb says: 'The snail has started on its way, but there's no knowing when it will arrive.' Your decision is not irrevocable."

"It is well that you have not set your heart on the inheritance," said Prince George Troubetzkoi, trying to console him; "'is not gold the source of many tears?'"

With Kikin the Tsarevitch repeatedly talked over the

possibility of a flight abroad, where he might live simply, away from everything, in peace.

"If it must be," advised Kikin, "go to the Emperor at Vienna. You will be safe there. The Emperor said he would receive you like a son. Or else go to the Pope, or the French Court, even kings find refuge there. It would be easy for them to protect you."

The Tsarevitch listened to these counsels, but unable to make up his mind, he lived from day to day waiting till the will of God should reveal itself.

Suddenly the whole situation changed. Peter's death threatened to disturb not only Russia but the whole world. He, who but yesterday was thinking of hiding himself with beggars, might on the morrow ascend the throne.

Unexpected friends surrounded Alexis; they met, whispered, and consulted together.

"We must wait and see."

"What will be, will be."

"Our turn will come!"

"The mice will bury the cat!"

On the night between the first and second of December, the Tsar's condition became so much worse that he ordered his confessor, the Archimandrite Theodosius, to be summoned and received the last rites of the Church. Neither Catherine nor Mènshikoff quitted the sick chamber. The residents of foreign courts, Russian Ministers, Senators, spent the night in the Winter Palace. When Alexis came in the morning to inquire about his father, the latter did not receive him, yet the sudden hush of the crowd which let him pass, the servile bows, the searching looks, pale faces, especially of his step-mother and Mènshikoff, told Alexis of the nearness of that which had always seemed to him so remote, so well-nigh impossible. His heart sank, his breath came quick and short, whether from joy or terror he knew not.

The same day, towards evening, he went to see Kikin, and the two had a long talk together. Kikin lived on the outskirts of the town, hard by the Ochta quarter. Thence the Tsarevitch returned straight home.

The sleighs dashed across the desert wood and wide empty streets, like vistas in a forest, with scarcely noticeable rows of log buildings buried in the snow drifts. The moon

itself was invisible ; but the air was filled with bright moonlit sparks. The snow did not fall from on high. The wind sent it in whirlwinds and in pillars like smoke. The luminous snowstorm sparkled and foamed in the dull blue sky like wine in a goblet.

He breathed the frosty air with delight. He felt bright as though his soul also was filled with a wild, luminous, intoxicating storm, and as the hidden moon lit up the storm, so also was his brightness due to a hidden thought, which though afraid to own, he yet felt to be the cause of his heady fear and joy.

Dim lights were glimmering through the bluish moonlit mist. They came from the frost-rimmed windows of the huts, which, overhung with icicles, suggested drunken eyes glowing from under hoary eyebrows.

"Perhaps," he thought, looking at them, "people are there drinking my health, the health of 'Russia's Hope'!" and his elation increased.

On his return, he sat down before the hearth where the embers were faintly glowing, and ordered Afanassieff to prepare him a hot drink. The room was dark, the candles had not yet been brought in. Alexis loved the dusk. Suddenly in the glow of the embers there flared up the blue centre of the spirit flame. The moonlit snowstorm peered with its blue eyes into the room through the transparent faery designs of the frost. Behind the window panes there quivered also a huge, living, blue, delirious flame.

Alexis was relating to Afanassieff his conversation with Kikin ; it was the outline of a plot drawn up in case flight was inevitable and return only possible after his father's death, which he thought would soon happen—the Tsar was suffering from epilepsy, and such people do not live long.

The Ministers, the Senators,—Tolstoi, Gorlovkine, Shafiroff, Apraksin, Streshneff, Dolgorouki, were all his friends, and would side with him. Bauer in Poland, the Archimandrite Petchorski in the Ukraine, Sheremetieff with all his forces.

"From the European frontier all would belong to me."

Afanassieff was listening with his usual stubborn, morose expression, which as much as said : The talk is all very fine, but how will it work ?

"And what about Ménshikoff?" he queried, when Alexis had ended.

"Ménshikoff will be impaled."

The old man shook his head.

"Why talk so rashly, my lord? What if some one should hear and report? Curse not the king—no, not in thy thought—and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber, for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter——"

"Oh, stop that meandering," the Tsarevitch waved his hand in annoyance, and yet with an unrestrainable sense of joy.

Afanassieff was roused.

"I am not meandering; I am only speaking the truth. It is as well not to praise the dream before it has proved true. Your Highness indulges in building castles in the air. You won't listen to us humble folk; you heed only those who deceive you. Both Tolstoi, the Judas, and Kikin, the Atheist, both are traitors. Be on your guard, my lord, you are not the first they have betrayed."

"I spit upon them all, if only the people stand by me! When the time comes and my father is dead, I will whisper to the prelates, and the prelates to the priests, and the priests to their flock, and they will make me Tsar, whether I will or no."

The old man remained silent, his face still bore the same stubborn, morose expression which clearly said, "This kind of talk is all very fine, but how will it work?"

"Why don't you say something?" said Alexis.

"What should I say, Tsarevitch, it is for you to decide. But as for running away from your father, I do not advise it."

"And why not?"

"Simply for this reason; it's all very well if you succeed, but suppose you fail, I shall have to bear the consequences. As it is you are ever ready to vent your wrath on me. We are unimportant people, yet we, too, can feel."

"Be on your guard, Afanassieff, and don't let any one know I told you. No one, save you and Kikin, knows of my plans. But even if you should report, you won't be believed; I will deny everything, you will be tortured."

Alexis had made this addition about the torture just for the sake of teasing the old man.

"When you are Tsar, will you then also threaten your faithful servants with the torture-chamber?"

"Have no fear, Afanassieff! If ever I am Tsar, I will do my best by you—— But I shall never be a Tsar."

"You will, you will," retorted the old man with such conviction that again Alexis was half-choking with joy.

Bells, the grating of sleighs on the snow, the snorting of horses, and voices were heard under the windows.

Alexis exchanged looks with Afanassieff. Who could it possibly be at so late an hour? Not from the palace, surely!

Afanassieff ran into the hall. It was the Archimandrite Theodosius. The Tsarevitch, on seeing him, thought his father had died; he grew so pale, that the monk, notwithstanding the darkness, noticed it while giving the blessing, and faintly smiled.

When they were alone, Theodosius sat near the fire opposite to the Tsarevitch, and silently looking at him with the same scarcely perceptible smile, began to warm his hands over the fire, opening and closing his fingers, which looked like bat-claws.

"How is my father?" at last Alexis asked, plucking up courage.

"Very bad," the monk sighed heavily, "so bad that we don't expect him to live."

The Tsarevitch made a sign of the cross.

"God's will be done!"

"Man is like a cedar of Lebanon to look upon," began Theodosius, chantingly in the church style, "yet he passes and no trace is left. His spirit will leave him; to earth will he return, and all his thoughts will perish with him on the same day"—he stopped short suddenly, and bringing his tiny shrunken face up to Alexis, he began to whisper in a quick, insinuating voice—"God waits a long time, yet when He visits He is severe. The Tsar's illness has been brought about by his incessant drinking and voluptuousness. It is God's revenge for attacking the clergy, whom he wanted to exterminate. No good can come while the Church is overawed by tyranny. Can this religion of ours

be called Christianity ; it might be the Turkish religion ; yet even in Turkey such things do not happen. Our Russian country is doomed."

Alexis could scarcely believe his ears. He had expected anything from Theodosius save this.

"But what were you prelates, guardians of the Russian Church, doing ? Whose business is it but yours to stand up for the Church ?" the Tsarevitch said, gazing intently at Theodosius.

"Ah, Tsarevitch, what power is left to us ? Our prelates are so bridled that they will follow whichever way you lead them. They have as much power as the country police ; they do the will of him who appoints them. They turn whichever way the wind blows. They are not prelates, but a mob."

And hanging his head, he added in a low voice, as if to himself, and to Alexis it seemed to be the voice of the past, "We were all eagles, now we have become bats."

His black hood, the wide sleeves of his gown, his ugly pointed face lit up by the blaze of the dying embers, all this made him look very much like a huge bat ; only in his clever eyes there glowed the light of an eagle's.

"It ill behoves you to talk and me to listen ;" the Tsarevitch at last burst out. "Who has brought the Church under the State ? Who is trying to introduce Lutheran customs among the people ? Who has persuaded the Tsar to destroy all the chapels, defile icons, and close the monasteries ? Who gives him dispensation for all this ?"

He stopped. The monk continued to eye him with the same persistent, penetrating gaze. Alexis felt uneasy. Was this not after all a trap ? Had Theodosius been sent to him as a spy by Ménshikoff, or by his father ?

"Does your Highness remember a figure of speech called 'the reductio ad absurdum' in logic ?" said the monk, winking with an infinitely cunning smile. "That is what I am doing. The Tsar has attacked the Church, yet dares not oppose it openly, only secretly he destroys, corrupts, and corrodes it. As for me, I had rather do a thing thoroughly, if I do it at all, and quickly if it has to be done. I prefer honest Lutheranism to a crooked orthodoxy ; an avowed atheism to crooked Lutheranism. The worse

the better ! That is my way. What the Tsar indicates I carry out. What he whispers I openly declare to the people. I make him convict himself ; let every one know that the Church of God is defiled. By dint of patience one can get used to anything ; yet if this won't work, the time will come when we, too, will have our fling. The cat will have to pay for all the tears it has caused the mice."

"Now this is adroit," laughed the Tsarevitch ; he felt admiration for Theodosius, though he did not believe a single word he said. "You are sly, Father, sly as the devil himself."

"Don't disdain devils. Satan serves God's purpose even against his will."

"Does your holiness compare yourself to a devil ?"

"I am a diplomatist," modestly retorted the monk, "with wolves I howl like a wolf. Dissimulation is not only recommended by political teachers, but by God Himself ; as a fisherman hides the hook with a worm, so did the Lord hide His Spirit in the flesh of His Son, and casting His line into the world's pool, outdid and caught Satan the Feind. Intrigue of divine wisdom ! Heavenly diplomacy !"

"May I ask you, Holy Father, do you believe in God ?" Again the Tsarevitch eyed him narrowly.

"How can a country be without a Church, and the Church without God ?" And then with a strange simper, half timid, half insolent, he added : "But you, too, Alexis Petrovitch, are not a fool ; you are more intelligent than your father, the Tsar ; though he is clever, yet he does not know men ; we often used to lead him by the nose. You will be a better judge of men." And suddenly he stooped and kissed Alexis' hand so quickly and adroitly that the latter had no time to pull it away ; only a shudder passed through him.

Though he could not help feeling that the monk's flattery was only honey on a knife, yet the honey was sweet.

He blushed, and in order to conceal his confusion, he continued with feigned curtness : "Be careful, father, and don't over-reach yourself. The pitcher goes to the well till it breaks. As a cat tries to scratch a bear, so you

dare my father ; but suppose the bear objects, and, turning round, crushes you, where will you be then ? ”

The monk's face fell, contracted, his eyes dilated, and looking round to ascertain that no one was standing behind him, he began to whisper in a hurried, disjointed, as it were feverish whisper :—

“ Ah ! your Highness, it is bad enough as it is, I always had a feeling that he will kill me ! When yet I was but a child I was brought to Moscow, together with other nobles ; we were led into a hall and allowed to kiss the sovereign's hand. I first went up to your uncle, the Tsar Ivan Alexyevitch ; but when I came to kiss Tsar Peter's hand, such fear possessed me that my knees shook ; I could hardly keep upright ; and ever since I have had the feeling that I shall die by that hand.”

Even now he was trembling with fear, yet hatred was stronger than fear. He began talking about Peter in such terms that Alexis almost believed them to be sincere. He discerned in this talk his own secret, wicked thoughts about his father.

“ He is called Great ! but in what does his greatness reveal itself ? He reigns as a tyrant. He introduces civilization with axe and knout ! And the axe, too, is nothing extraordinary, anybody can buy one. He is ever on the search for plots and rebellions. But he does not realize that he himself is the source of all this unrest. He himself is the first rebel. He breaks, knocks down, fells with all his might. But there is no method in it. What multitudes have been executed, what quantities of blood have been shed ! Yet the wrong does not decrease. People's consciences are not bound. Blood is not water, it cries for vengeance ! Soon God's wrath will come down upon Russia, and when civil war begins then the eyes of every one will be opened. Such an uproar, such decapitations will be set going—shwisk, shwisk, shwisk !”—he passed his hand across his throat and tried to imitate the sound of an axe. “ And only then, out of this sea of blood will arise the Church of God, pure, whiter than the snow, like a woman arrayed in the glory of the sun, reigning over all rulers.”

Alexis watched his face, disfigured by passion, his eyes

flashing with wild fire, and it seemed as if a madman was sitting before him.

He remembered hearing from a monk that Father Theodosius was sometimes subject to melancholy; tormented by the evil spirit, he falls to the ground and behaves like one beside himself.

"I anticipated this, and that is what I was leading up to," concluded Theodosius, "but it seems that God has shown mercy to Russia; the Tsar is struck down, the people are spared. You are sent unto us, you are our salvation, our joy, our bright son of the Church, the most pious sovereign, Alexis Petrovitch, Autocrat of all the Russias, Your Majesty!"

The Tsarevitch started up in terror. Theodosius too had risen, fallen at his feet, embraced his knees, and lifted up his voice in a frenzied, inexorable, almost threatening prayer.

"Protect, have mercy on your servant! I will give you all! All I have kept back from your father, all I have reserved for myself. I wanted to become a Patriarch, I no longer want it. I want nothing. Everything belongs to you, my darling, my joy, my heart's delight. Aliosha! I love you! You shall be Tsar and Patriarch! You will unite the earthly with the heavenly, the white hood of Constantine with the crown of Monomachus. You shall be greater than any other Tsar on earth. You, the first, you alone! You and God. While I, I will be your slave, your dog, a worm under your foot. Truly, your Majesty, I embrace your feet like those of Christ and adore you."

He bowed very low before him; the wide black of his pall spread on the floor like the gigantic wings of a bat. The diamond-set panagia with the portrait of the Tsar and the Crucifix fell to the ground with a clatter. Abomination filled Alexis' soul, a cold shudder ran through him as from the touch of some vermin. He wanted to push him back, strike him, spit into his face; yet he could not move, he was as if spell-bound by some fearful nightmare. And it seemed to him that this was no longer the miserable Theodosius, but someone strong, terrible, powerful, who lay prostrate before him, some one who had been an eagle and had become a bat; was it not the Church herself, dishonoured, dominated by the State? And through this abomin-

ation, through this terror, a mad delight, a giddy sense of power turned his head. It seemed that somebody was lifting him on black, gigantic wings and showing unto him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, saying—"If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine!"

The embers on the hearth were faintly glimmering under the thick layer of ashes. The blue flame of the spirit had all but gone out. The blue flame of the luminous storm had grown faint outside the windows.

Somebody pale with pale eyes was peering through the windows. And the flowers wrought by the frost on the window panes stood out white, like the phantoms of flowers.

When Alexis recovered he was alone. Theodosius had disappeared as if he had fallen through the ground or melted away into the air.

"What has he been raving about," thought Alexis, as if waking from a sleep. "The white hood—the crown of Monomachus—madness—melancholy—and how can he tell that the Tsar will die! Where did he get this from? How many times did we despair of his life, God always showed mercy——"

And suddenly he remembered what Kikin had said to him this evening:

"Your father is not so ill as he seems. The last rites of the Church were administered to him on purpose to make people believe he is very ill, but it is only deception. He is only testing you and the others, trying to see how you all will act after his death. You know the fable—'The mice gathered together to bury the cat, they pranced and danced when suddenly up leapt the cat!—There was an end to the revel.' As for his taking communion, he has his own views on this subject."

At the time these words had stung Alexis' heart with shame and disgust. Yet he purposely let them pass, he was in too good a humour to trouble about anything.

"Kikin is right," he now decided, and a dead hand seemed to grip his heart. "Yes, all was deception, pretence, dissimulation, devil's policies, a game of cat and mouse—the cat suddenly leapt up and grabbed—Nothing has been, nothing will be. All these hopes, rhapsodies, dreams about

glory, liberty, power were only visions, a delirium, a madness ! ”

The blue flame lit up for the last time and then went out. Darkness ensued, only the glowing embers peering from under the ashes seemed to wink, smiling like an artful blinking eye. The Tsarevitch felt uneasy. It seemed to him that Theodosius had not gone away, that he remained here somewhere in a corner hiding, holding his breath ; that at any moment he would whirl round with his black bat-like wings, and whisper in his ear, “All the power will I give thee and the glory of them, for all is delivered unto me, and unto whosoever I will, I give it.”

“Afanássieff ! ” called out the Tsarevitch. “Bring a light ! be quick ! ”

The old man coughed and grunted angrily at having to come down from his warm couch.

“And what did I hope for ? ” the Tsarevitch questioned himself, for the first time recovering full consciousness during those days. “Is it possible ? ”

Afanássieff, pattering with his bare feet, brought in a snuffy tallow candle. The light hurt Alexis’ eyes, it seemed blinding, dazzling after the darkness. A light as it were flashed across his soul, he suddenly saw what he neither wanted nor dared to face—the reason why he felt so happy—the thought that his father would die. And he was horror-struck to comprehend that he longed for that death.

CHAPTER III

“**D**O you remember, my Lord, how in your room at Preobrazhensky I asked you before the Holy Gospels, whether you would regard me as your confessor, your guardian-angel, God’s apostle—the judge of your actions ; and whether you believed that I, unworthy though I might be, possessed that holy power of the priest to bind, or to loose, which Christ granted to his apostles ; and you answered ‘ Yes ’ ? ”

So spake to the Tsarevitch the arch-priest Father James Ignatiev, who had come from Moscow to Petersburg, about three weeks after Alexis’ interview with Theodosius.

Ten years before Father James had stood in the same relationship to Alexis as the Patriarch Nikon had stood to his grandfather, the gentle Tsar Alexis Michailovitch. The grandson had followed his grandfather’s precept : “ Let the clergy be first ; submit to them without question, the priesthood is higher than the Tsarhood.” Amid the universal desecration and thralldom of the Church, the Tsarevitch felt it a sweet privilege to bow before the humble priest James. In the pastor’s face he saw the face of the Lord himself, and he believed that the Lord was Lord of lords, and King of kings. The more absolute and severe Father James was, the more humble was the Tsarevitch, and the more he rejoiced in his humility. He bestowed upon his spiritual father all that love he could not give to his father after the flesh. It was a jealous, tender, passionate friendship, almost like that between lovers. “ I take God for witness that in the whole Russian Empire I have no other such friend as your holiness,” he wrote to Father James from abroad. “ I did not mean to say it, but, never mind, I will now ; may God grant you long life, and should you

be called to a better world I should have no desire to return to Russia."

Suddenly it all changed. Father James had a son-in-law, the clerk Peter Anfimoff. Yielding to the entreaties of his confessor, Alexis had taken this Anfimoff into his service and entrusted to him the administration of his estates at Poretzkoye, in the Government of Nishni-Novgorod. The arbitrary rule of the clerk ruined the peasants, and almost drove them to revolt. Many times did they write to Alexis complaining about Peter the thief, but the latter always came out unscathed, thanks to the protection of Father James. At last it dawned upon the peasants to send a messenger to Petersburg, to their old friend and countryman, Ivan Afanássieff, valet to the Tsarevitch. Ivan went himself to Poretzkoye to investigate matters, and on his return, reported in such a way that no doubt whatever remained of Peter's dishonesty and villainy, and what was more important, that Father James knew all about it. It was a severe blow to Alexis. He was indignant, not because of the harm done to him or his peasants, but because the Church of God seemed to him desecrated in the person of her unworthy pastor. For a long time he would not see Father James, he concealed his resentment and said nothing; but at last it burst out.

Under the nickname of Father Hell, together with Jibanda, Sleeper, the Lasher and other boon companions of the Tsarevitch, the arch-priest was wont to take part in the drinking bouts of the Most Drunken Conclave, an imitation of Peter's more famous association. At one of their orgies Alexis began denouncing the Russian clergy, calling them Judas, the Betrayers of Christ.

"When will the new prophet Elijah arise to break your backs, ye priests of Baal?" exclaimed Alexis, looking straight at Father James.

"You speak wildly, Tsarevitch," the latter interposed with severity, "it ill becomes you to cast reproaches at us, your unworthy intercessors with God——"

"Oh! we know your prayers," interrupted Alexis, "You seek pardon and in the same breath pray for God's blessing on your knavery. My father, the Tsar Peter, may God grant him long life! did well to clip your wings!

You deserve to be treated much worse than this, you Pharisees, hypocrites, serpent brood."

Father James got up from the table, came up to the Tsarevitch and asked in a solemn voice :—

"Of whom do you speak, my Lord. Is it myself?"

At this minute Father James resembled the holy Father, the patriarch Nikon, but Peter's son no longer resembled the gentle Tsar Alexis Michailoevitch.

"You too are included," answered the Tsarevitch, standing up and continuing to look at Father James. "You too, Father, cannot be exempt from the general rule; you too have sold your soul to the devil; and have become a priest from motives of self interest. Why do you assume such pride? You want the Patriarchate, no doubt? If so, you are a long way off it. Wait, the Lord will soon cast you down from the pride of place which your Church assumes, and you will fall into the mud, mud, mud!"

He added a ribald expression; all laughed. Father James lost control over himself, he too was drunk, though not so much with wine as with anger. "Hold your tongue, Alexis," he cried. "Be quiet, you puppy."

"If I am a puppy, you, Father, are a dog!"

Father James' face became purple, he trembled all over, raised both his hands over the head of the Tsarevitch, and with the voice in which he was wont to pronounce the anathema against all heretics and apostates, he now called out:

"I will curse you with the power given to us by the Lord Himself, through the Apostle Peter——"

"Spare your breath," retorted Alexis with a malignant smile. "Don't invoke Peter the Apostle, but Peter Anfi-moff the clerk, the thief, your beloved son-in-law, it's he, Peter the vile, Peter the evil one, who possesses you and cries within you!"

Father James dropped one hand and struck Alexis on the cheek: "Closing the mouth of the evil one."

The Tsarevitch fell upon him, with one hand he seized him, the other was searching for a knife on the table. Distorted by anger, pale, with flashing eyes, the face of Alexis bore a momentary, mysterious likeness to his father Peter. It was one of those fits of fury which from time to time the

Tsarevitch was subject to, and while it lasted he was capable of any crime.

The others started up and rushed to separate them; they seized the combatants by hands and feet, and, after considerable effort, succeeded in parting them.

This quarrel, like all similar quarrels, had no result: a drunkard is not responsible for his deeds; it is a usual thing to drink, fight, sleep it off and be friends again. They too made it up; but the old love did not return. The priest had lost his authority over the grandson as he had done over the grandfather.

Father James was the intermediary between the Tsarevitch and a whole secret confederacy, almost a conspiracy, against Peter and his new town. This society had for its centre the disgraced Tsaritsa Eudoxia, the first wife of Peter, who had been banished to Sousdal. When the news spread of the Tsar's supposed fatal illness, Father James hurried to Petersburg, bearing a message from Sousdal, where great things were expected when Alexis should become Tsar. But things had taken a new turn by the time the priest had arrived. The Tsar grew better so rapidly that his recovery seemed almost miraculous, or else his illness had been feigned. Kikin's prophecy had been fulfilled: the cat which was supposed to be dead had leapt up, and there was an end to the mice's merry-making; all dispersed and hid themselves. Peter had gained his end, and had learnt what his son's strength would be, should he, the Tsar, really die.

Rumours had reached Alexis that his father was very wroth with him. One of the spies, was it Theodosius himself? had whispered, it was said, to Peter, that the Tsarevitch was cheerful at the time of his father's illness and that his face was bright and joyous.

Again all forsook the Tsarevitch, avoided him as a leper. After having dreamt of the throne he saw himself nigh to the scaffold, and he knew that he should find no mercy. Daily he dreaded an interview with his father. Yet hatred and revolt stifled fear. This deception, this dissimulation, this feline slyness, this sacrilegious trifling with death seemed vile to him. He could not help remembering another dissimulation of his father's. The letter

threatening disinheritance, "a declaration to my son," which the Tsarevitch received on the day of his wife's funeral, October 22, 1715, had been dated October 11, the eve of his son's, young Peter Alexyevitch's, birth. At the time he had not noticed the antedating; but now he saw the reason for this subterfuge. When a son was born to him, Alexis, the Tsar could not very well have ignored the same in his "declaration"; nor could he threaten absolute disinheritance when a new heir had appeared. The substitution of dates leant an appearance of legitimacy to what was in reality unlawful.

The Tsarevitch smiled bitterly, when he remembered how his father always liked to pose as artless and straightforward.

He could forgive his father everything, all the great wrongs and ill-doings, but he could not get over this petty cunning.

Father James found the Tsarevitch immersed in these thoughts. Alexis was pleased to see him; he was lonely and welcomed any visitor. But Nikon's spirit was strong in Father James. Feeling that Alexis now more than ever needed his help, he resolved to remind him of his wrongs.

"Tsarevitch," continued Father James, "you have broken the vow made unto me in Preobrazhensky before the Holy Gospels, treating it lightly and with contempt. You no longer consider me your guardian angel, the apostle of Christ, the judge of all your actions; on the contrary you have taken upon yourself to judge and outrage us with reviling words. And much misery did you bring into our household through this affair, between our son-in-law and the peasants of Poretzkoye. And you have plucked me, your spiritual father, by the beard, a thing your highness had no right to do, if only for fear of the living God. . . Though I be a vile sinner, yet I am, nevertheless, a minister of the pure body and blood of Christ. The Lord of lords will judge between us on the day of the great reckoning, when there will be no dissimulation. Then the power of the world will fade away, and the Tsar will stand before God simply as a man."

Without a word the Tsarevitch raised his eyes to him;

they expressed neither grief nor despair, but such blank indifference that Father James did not continue ; he understood that this was not the right moment to settle old accounts. He was warm-hearted and deeply attached to Alexis.

" Well, God will forgive you," he said in conclusion, " and you, my friend, forgive me also——"

Then he added, looking into his face with tender anxiety :

" Why are you so downcast, Alexis ? "

The Tsarevitch hung his head and did not reply.

" I have brought you something," Father James smiled with a cheerful, mysterious air, " a letter from your mother. I have recently been to see them. Their joy has invigorated me. Again they have had visions, voices, saying : The time will soon come." He searched in his pocket for the letter.

" Don't," the Tsarevitch stopped him, " don't, Father James. It would be better not to let me see it. What good can it do ? Life is particularly difficult for me at this moment. This might be reported, my father could get wind of it. We are surrounded by spies. Don't go to see the religious again, and bring me no more letters in future. We must not——"

Father James again looked at him long and anxiously.

" This is what they have brought him to. . . *the son denies his mother !* "

" Can't you get on with your father ? " he asked in a whisper.

Alexis only waved his hand and his head sank lower still. Father James understood it all. Tears filled the old man's eyes, he bent over the Tsarevitch, laid one hand on the young man's, while with the other he began gently to stroke his hair, as he would that of a sick child, saying :

" What is it, my little son ? What is it, my son ? the Lord be with thee ! If you have something on your mind, don't keep it back ; it will do you good for us to talk it over together. I am your father, remember ; though I am but a sinner yet the Lord may give me wisdom."

The Tsarevitch continued to be silent and avoided his gaze. But suddenly his face fell, his lips quivered with a hollow tearless sob, he sank at his confessor's feet.

"It's hard, Father, it's hard! I know not what to do. I can bear it no longer—I wish my father——"

He was unable to proceed, he seemed frightened by what he was going to say.

"Come into the chapel, come quickly, I'll tell you all there, I want to confess. Judge, Father, in the sight of God between my father and me——"

In the chapel, a small room next to the bedchamber, the walls were covered with ancient icons, in gold and silver trimmings set with precious stones; they were a heritage of Tsar Alexis. No ray of sunshine ever penetrated here. Lamps lit the perpetual gloom.

The Tsarevitch knelt before the desk which held the Gospels. Father James, robed, solemn, as it were transfigured, his face quite simple and peasant like, slightly heavy, and bloated with age, yet from a distance still handsome, reminding one of the Saviour's face on old images—held the cross, saying:—

"My son, Christ is invisibly present to receive thy confession; be not ashamed, neither afraid; conceal nothing from me, but recount to me all thy sins so that thou mayest receive the absolution of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And as the sins were named one after the other in the order of the confession, the priest putting the questions, the penitent answering them, Alexis' heart grew lighter and lighter, as though some powerful being were removing load after load from his soul, and, touching with light finger the wounds of his conscience, healed them. He felt happy and awed; his heart burned within him and it seemed to him, that not Father James, but Christ Himself was standing before him.

"Tell me, son, hast thou willingly or unwillingly slain a man?"

This was a question the Tsarevitch was anticipating with dread.

"I have sinned here," he replied in a scarcely audible voice, "not in deed, nor in words, but in thought. I wished my father——"

And again, as before, he stopped short as if what he was going to say had frightened him. But the All-seeing Eye

penetrated the very depths of his soul, and nothing could be hid from It.

With effort, trembling, pale and bathed in cold sweat, he concluded :

“ When my father was ill, I longed for his death.”

He stopped and shrank together and bent his head lower still. He closed his eyes so as not to see Him who stood before him ; his heart sank in an agony of dread, as though he were waiting for the last word of condemnation, or absolution, which would peal forth like thunder as on the day of Judgment, when suddenly he heard the familiar, ordinary human voice of Father James, saying : “ God will forgive thee, child. We all desired it ! ”

The Tsarevitch lifted his head, opened his eyes, and saw the familiar, ordinary, human face, not in the least alarming, with little wrinkles round the brown eyes ; kind and slightly cunning, a mole with three hairs on the round plump cheek, the reddish grizzled beard, the same he had once pulled in a scuffle, when in his cups. An ordinary priest, nothing remarkable about him ; yet, if a thunder-bolt had fallen, Alexis would have been less dumbfounded than by those simple words—“ God will forgive thee, we all desired it.”

And meanwhile, the priest continued, as if nothing had happened :—

“ Tell me, my son, hast thou abstained from blood, carrion, from the flesh of strangled animal, or those killed by the wolf, and smitten by the bird ? Hast thou ever defiled thyself by eating what has been forbidden in the holy laws ? Hast thou tasted in Lent, or on Wednesdays and Fridays, butter and cheese ? ”

“ Father,” exclaimed the Tsarevitch, “ great is my sin, the Lord knows how great it is ! ”

“ Hast thou broken the Lenten fast ? ” asked Father James with anxiety.

“ I did not mean that, Father ; I speak of my father, the Tsar. How is it possible ? I am his son, flesh of his flesh. The son prayed for the death of his father ! He who longs for another person’s death is a murderer. I am a parricide in thought. I am troubled, Father James, sorely troubled. Verily, Father, I confess to thee as to Christ Himself. Judge me, help me, be gracious unto me, O Lord ! ”

Father James looked at him, first in astonishment, then in anger.

"You repent for having revolted against your father after the flesh, but you forget your revolt against your father after the spirit! Inasmuch as the spirit is more than the flesh, by so much is the father after the spirit greater than the father after the flesh——"

And again he talked in an empty, laboured, literary manner, insisting again and again upon the honour due to the priesthood above all. "You, my son, have rebelled. Like a frenzied man, like a mad goat you have screamed at me. May God not count this unto you! It is not your own doing, but Satan plays me false through you. He has saddled you like a sorry jade and rides you proudly like a wild boar, according to the vision of the holy Fathers, wherever he chooses, till at last he will drive you into eternal perdition."

And gradually he led the talk to the affair with the Poretz-koye peasants and his son-in-law Peter Anfimoff. A veil like a cobweb, grey, wan and sticky, spread before the eyes of the Tsarevitch, and the face which stood before him seemed to dilate and double, as in a fog; another face appeared instead, also familiar, with a red pointed nose ever scenting the air, blear-eyed and sly, the face of Peter the clerk; and it seemed as if the dignified face of the Most Reverend Father James, which resembled the face of Christ as painted on ancient icons, merged and mingled in a strange unholy way with the features of Peter the thief, Peter the rogue.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ by the grace and abounding compassion of His love, doth pardon and forgive thee, son Alexis, all thy sins!" recited Father James, covering the young man's head with the stole, "and I, unworthy minister, unto whom He has given the power to pronounce pardon and absolution, declare thee free of thy sins in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit!"

Alexis felt an emptiness in his heart. The words seemed to him meaningless, powerless, without mystery, without awe. He felt that what was forgiven here on earth would not be forgiven him in heaven; that absolution received here was not absolution there.

The same day towards evening, Father James went for his

vapour bath; on his return, he sat down near the hearth opposite to the Tsarevitch, and began to drink the hot "sbeeten," boiled in a kettle of red copper, which reflected the red face of the priest. He drank in leisurely fashion, glass after glass, and mopped his brow with a large checkered handkerchief. He took his bath and drank his drink as if performing a rite. In the way he drank and munched the cracknels, he maintained the same order and solemnity as when officiating at a Church service. He manifestly was a respecter of ancient traditions, and in him appeared the representative of the old Orthodoxy of Russia: "be immoveable like a pillar of marble; bend neither to the right nor to the left."

The Tsarevitch listened to detached arguments as to what bunches of twigs were softest for use in a vapour bath, what herbs, mint or tansy, made the best scent for a bath; then to a story of how the priest's own wife had nearly suffocated herself in a vapour bath last winter on the eve of St. Nicholas' day. Then to an exhortation drawn from the holy Fathers: "The worm is exceedingly humble and lean, while thou art proud and renowned; but if thou wilt be reasonable, destroy thy pride, remembering that strength and power will be meat for the worms; fear vanity, eschew anger."

Again the affair with the peasants of Poretzkoye and the inevitable Peter Anfimoff was introduced.

The Tsarevitch was sleepy, and it seemed to him, at times, that it was not a man sitting and talking before him, but a cow, interminably chewing the cud.

The twilight was falling. Outside, the snow was melting, the weather was warm; a yellow dirty fog hung in the air; the pale lineaments of the frost-flowers melted and wept on the window panes. The sky was dull, watery and lowering like the sly, vile eyes of Peter the clerk. Father James sat opposite the Tsarevitch in the place which, three weeks ago, had been occupied by the Archimandrite Theodosius; and Alexis involuntarily compared the two pastors, that of the Old and that of the New Church.

"Not prelates but riraff! we were eagles, we have become bats," said Theodosius. "We were eagles and have become beasts of burden," the priest James might have

said. Behind Theodosius stood the eternal politician, the ancient prince of the world; behind Father James there also was a politician, the new prince of this world, Peter the rogue. One was worthy of the other. The Old was worthy of the New. And could it be possible that, screened behind these two persons, the past and the future, there was a third, the unique image of the Church as a whole? He looked now at the dirty sky, now at the red face of the priest. In both there was something flat, trivial, eternally trivial; something which was ever present and commonplace; and yet more awful than the wildest delirium. The heart of the Tsarevitch was empty; he was weary with a weariness bitterer than death itself. Again, as on another night, a bell was heard, first far off in the distance and then louder and louder as it came nearer. The Tsarevitch listened anxiously.

"Somebody is driving up; are they coming here?" said Father James.

The splashing of horses' hoofs in the melted snow was heard, the squeak of the sleigh runners on the bare stones, voices in the entrance, steps across the hall; the doors opened and in came a giant with a handsome stupid face, a strange mixture of a Roman soldier and a Russian, Ivan the fool. It was the Tsar's orderly, Alexander Ivanovitch Roumiantseff, Captain of the Preobrazhensky Guards. He handed a letter to the Tsarevitch, who broke the seal and read:—

"Son, we order thee to come to-morrow to the Winter Palace. PETER."

Alexis was neither frightened nor surprised; he seemed to have foreseen this interview and felt indifferent.

* * * * *

That night the Tsarevitch had a dream, which he often dreamt, and always in the same way.

This dream was connected with a story he had been told in his childhood. In the time of the executions of the Streltsi Tsar Peter ordered the body of his enemy, the chief rebel leader, Boyarin Ivan Miloslavski, who was a friend of Sophia, to be disinterred; it had remained for seventeen years in St. Nicholas' Church; the open coffin was then

drawn by swine to Preobrazhensky, and there placed in the torture chamber under the block on which traitors were beheaded so that the blood should flow on the dead man ; then the body was ordered to be cut into pieces and buried in that chamber under the block—"so that," ran the ukase, "the vile parts of the thief Miloslavski should be always watered by the blood of thieves, according to the word of the Psalmist: 'The Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.'"

In this dream Alexis seemed at first to see nothing, but only hear that terrible song from the fairy-tale about the sister and brother, which his grandmother, Peter's mother, the old Tsaritsa Natalia Kirillovna Naryishkin, had often told him in his childhood. The brother, changed into a goat, was calling his sister Alionoushka, but in the dream Alexis heard instead of "Alionoushka" his own name Alioshenka (diminutive for Alexis).

Alioshenka, Alioshenka,
Hot fires are burning,
Cauldrons are steaming,
Knives are being sharpened,
All to butcher thee.

Before his eyes rises the vision of a lonely street of thawing snow, a row of bleak log huts, the leaden cupolas of the old church of St. Nicholas. It is an early, gloomy dawn ; more like evening. On the horizon a comet ; a huge star with a tail red as blood. Fat, black pigs, spotted with pink, are drawing a mock sleigh. On the sleigh stands an open coffin ; in the coffin lies something black stained with blood in the red glow of the comet. The thin ice on the spring pools cracks under the weight of the sleighs, and the black mud splashes like blood. Stillness reigns in the air, as at the end of the world before the archangel's trumpet sounds ; only the pigs grunt, and somebody's voice, very much like the voice of that old man in the green faded pall, St. Demetrius of Rostov, whom Alexis remembered to have seen in his childhood, whispers in his ear : "The Lord abhors a bloody and deceitful man," and the Tsarevitch knows that the bloody man is Peter himself.

He awoke from this dream as usual, in a tremor. A nearly

dark gloomy morn was visible through the window. The air was hushed as at the approach of the Judgment day. Suddenly he heard a knock at the door and the sleepy, grumpy voice of Afanassieff :

"Get up, get up, Tsarevitch, it's time to go to your father."

He tried to shout aloud and jump up ; but his limbs seemed paralysed. He felt as if his body was not his own ; he lay as if dead. The dream was continuing, and he had wakened up in his dream. At the same time he heard a knock at the door, and the voice of Afanassieff saying :—

"It's time to go to your father !"

And his grandmother's voice, old and feeble, like the bleating of a goat, was singing to him in a low voice that terrible song :

Alioshenka, Alioshenka,
Hot fires are burning,
Cauldrons are steaming,
Knives are being sharpened,
All to butcher thee.

CHAPTER IV

PETER was speaking to Alexis :—

“In the beginning of the war with Sweden what great reverses did we not suffer because of our own ignorance? How much sorrow and patience did our apprenticeship cost us, before we were found worthy to behold the enemy, before whom we had trembled, tremble in his turn before us? All this has been accomplished by my poor efforts and those of other true sons of Russia. For to this day are we to eat our bread in the sweat of our brow, as God commanded our forefather Adam. As far as it lay in our power we all toiled like Noah to build the ark of Russia, guided by one thought alone: that the glory of Russia should spread over the world!

“But when I, after contemplating this joy granted by God unto our country, consider my successor, a grief well nigh strong as my joy gnaws at my heart, for I know you to be incapable of directing the affairs of the state.”

As he was ascending the staircase of the Winter Palace and passing the grenadier who stood on guard at the door of the Tsar's working room, Alexis had felt, as always before an interview with his father, an instinctive physical fear. His head swam, his teeth chattered, his legs gave way, he was afraid of falling.

Yet as his father proceeded in a calm even voice with his long speech, evidently prepared, and possibly committed to memory, Alexis' fear lessened. Everything within gradually subsided, hardened, and again he felt indifferent, as if his father's speech were neither addressed to him, nor had regard to him. The Tsarevitch stood like a soldier, erect, hands to his sides, listening yet not heeding, looking stealthily around the room with a distracted, indifferent curiosity.

Lathes, carpenter's tools, astrolabes, spirit levels, compasses, globes and other mathematical instruments, accessories of artillery and fortification, crowded the small workshop, giving it the appearance of a ship's cabin. Upon the walls panelled in dark oak, hung the seascape views of Peter's favourite Dutch master, Adam Silo, "Useful for the art of seamanship." All these objects were familiar to the Tsarevitch from his childhood; they roused in him a flood of memories. On the Dutch newspapers lay a large round pair of iron-rimmed spectacles, bound with blue silk to prevent them hurting the bridge of the nose; next to them a night cap made of white striped dimity with a green tassel, which Alexis remembered to have torn off when playing with it, whereat his father had not got cross, but had left off writing a decree and had sewed it on himself.

Peter sat at a table covered with papers, in an old leather armchair with a high back, near a hot stove. He wore a faded blue, threadbare, dressing gown which the Tsarevitch remembered having seen before the Poltava battle; he recognised the same coloured patch, only more brilliant, on the place once burnt by his pipe; a red woollen waistcoat with white bone buttons, one of which was broken and only half remained; he recognised it at once and he counted, as for some reason he always did during the long admonishing speeches of his father, and he saw that the broken button was the sixth from below. The nether garments were made of coarse blue woollen stuff; on his feet he wore grey worsted darned stockings and old worn slippers. The Tsarevitch scrutinised all these details, so familiar, yet so remote. Only his father's face he could scarcely see: through the window, behind which spread the white surface of the Neva, a slanting ray of yellow winter sun fell between them, thin, long, and pointed as a sword. It separated them and shut them off from one another. In the luminous square on the floor made by the window, right at the feet of the Tsar, lay coiled up asleep his favourite dog Lisette.

The Tsar spoke in an even, monotonous, and slightly husky voice (for he had a cold), as if reading aloud a written decree:—

"God is not responsible for your incapacity, since He

has neither deprived you of reason, nor robbed you of physical strength; though you are not of a very strong build, neither are you weak. Yet you refuse to interest yourself in military affairs and wars, which have led us from darkness into light, and through which we, before unknown to the world, are now known and respected. I do not wish you to make war without just cause, only to love the military art and to try to excel in it. For this is one of the agents of the two essential requisites of government, which are order and defence. Contempt of war will lead to general ruin, as the fall of the Greek Empire serves to show. Did it not perish because it laid aside its arms, and, filled with the love of peace, desirous of leading a quiet life, always yielded to the enemy, who brought it into the never-ending bondage of tyrants? If you imagine that generals can do the work by deputy, this is truly no valid reason, for everybody imitates naturally his master; what the master aims at, all aim at; and what he turns away from, no one cares for. Having no liking for military affairs you studied nothing, you ignored everything. And being ignorant, how can you command, how can you reward the deserving, punish the indolent, seeing you know nothing about their work? You will be forced to wait, gaping, with open mouth, like a fledgling. You make your weak health an excuse for not performing your military duties. That is no sound reason. I do not demand superhuman efforts, only goodwill, which no illness can hinder. You think that there are many monarchs who do not personally take part in war, and yet things go on just as well. That is true, but though they don't go themselves, at least they have an interest in it; for example, the late king of France, Louis, was seldom present during campaigns, yet he so loved it, and caused such valiant deeds to be done, that his wars were termed the theatre and school of arms of the world; and not only in his wars, but also in other affairs and industries he showed great interest, and thus the renown of his country rose above all others. Having laid this before you I will now return to your own character, for I am only human, and liable to die at any moment——"

The sunbeam, which separated them, had faded away, and Alexis saw Peter's face. The face had changed, as if

not a month, but years had passed since their last interview, then Peter had been in the bloom and power of manhood, now he was almost an old man. The Tsarevitch saw at once that his father's illness had not been feigned, and that, probably, he had been nearer death than he himself and those around him had thought. The bald head—the hair in front had fallen out—the swollen eyes, the protruding jaw, the whole face pale, yellow, bloated as if dropsical—had about it something heavy, motionless, like a mask taken from a dead face. Only his eyes, brilliant, as it were inflamed, dilated like those of a captive bird of prey, prominent, protruding, had something of the old youthful expression, which seemed now indescribably weary, weak, almost pitiable.

And at the same time Alexis understood that, notwithstanding all his thought on the subject of his father's death, although he had expected, even wished that death, he had never realized it, as if unable to believe that his father could really die. Now for the first time he believed in the possibility of this death. In this new feeling there was new perplexity, and a terror never before experienced, not for himself, but for his father; what must death be to a man like that? How would he die?

“For I am only human, and liable to die,” continued Peter. “To whom shall I leave what with God's help I have begun to plant, and some of which has already begun to take root? Shall it be to him who, like the unprofitable servant of the Gospel, buried his talent in the earth, and thrust away the gift God gave him? I refer to your wicked and obstinate character. For how often have I remonstrated with you upon this, and not only remonstrated with but flogged you; and how many years is it since I gave up intercourse with you, but to no purpose. It's all in vain, you will do nothing, all you ask for is to live at home in indolence and self-indulgence. There is something in you which thwarts all my projects. On one side you have royal blood and a high station, on the other plebeian thoughts like the lowest of the serfs. You are surrounded by worthless people who can advance you in nothing except in actions which are mean and depraved. And what return do you make

to your father for your birth? Do you help me in my arduous toils and anxieties, having now reached manhood? Ah never! never! All know this. But what is worse, you actually hate my work, which, I, not sparing my own life, have done for my people, and it is plain you will destroy everything after my death! And pondering over this in grief, seeing that I can in no way induce you to reform, I have resolved to declare unto you my last testament, and then wait a while to see whether you will not sincerely reform. If not let it be known unto you——”

Here he was seized with a long painful fit of coughing, which the illness had left him. His face grew livid, his eyes protruded, sweat stood on his brow, his veins swelled. He choked, and like small children who have not learnt to cough, he choked from his vain, frantic efforts to expectorate. There was something ludicrous, and at the same time terrible, in this mixture of childishness and old age. Lisette was roused, she lifted up her head and looked at her master with wistful pitying gaze. The Tsarevitch also looked at his father, and suddenly he felt a stab at his heart, “The dog has some pity for him,” he mused, “while I——”

At last Peter got the phlegm up and spat it out. He swore, and mopping his brow and eyes, continued where he had left off; his voice, though huskier, was still passionless and even, as if he were reading aloud a written decree:

“Once more I repeat, so that you may know——”

He dropped his handkerchief; he was going to pick it up, but Alexis forestalled him; he stooped, lifted it, and gave it to his father. This little action brought to his mind that shy, tender, almost loving feeling he once had for his father.

“Father,” he exclaimed with such an agitated expression in his face and voice, that Peter looked at him fixedly and then cast down his eyes, “God is my witness that towards you I have been guilty of no vile action or design. I do not feel fit for the throne, and fear to undertake responsibilities which I could not fulfil. How can I? and am I, father . . . for thee . . . O Lord!”

His voice broke. He raised his hands convulsively in despair, as if about to clutch his head, and so he remained,

pale and trembling, with a strange distracted smile on his face. He did not know himself what it was, he only felt how something grew, rose, and was struggling forth from his breast with terrible force. One word, one look, one sign from his father and his son would have fallen at his feet, would have embraced them and sobbed with such tears, as would have melted and broken down that terrible wall between them, like sunshine upon ice. He would have explained everything, he would have found words which would have made his father forgive, understand how all his life through he had loved him, him alone, and even now continued to love him with a love stronger than ever, and that he wanted nothing but to be allowed to go on loving him, to die for him had he but once caressed him and said, as he used to say to the child, pressing him to his heart : " Aliosha, my darling boy ! "

" Drop this childishness," he heard Peter saying gruffly ; yet it seemed to be assumed roughness, in reality he was moved, and tried to conceal his emotion. " Don't try to find excuses, prove your faith by your deeds ; words cannot be trusted. It is written : ' An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit.' "

To avoid his son's gaze Peter looked aside, and yet there was something flitting and trembling in his face, as if the true face, familiar and loved by the Tsarevitch, were peering through a dead mask. But Peter had already mastered his emotion ; as he went on talking, his face grew severe, his voice relentless :—

" Now-a-days idlers are not high in my favour ! He who eats bread and is unprofitable to Tsar and country is like the worm, which brings everything into decay, and confers no benefit upon mankind. Even the Apostle saith : ' If any man will not work neither shall he eat.' You have shown yourself to be an idler——"

Alexis did not heed the words ; yet every sound wounded his soul, cut into it with insufferable pain, as a knife stabbing a living body. This was akin to murder ; he meant to cry, stop his father, yet he felt that his father would understand nothing, would hear nothing. Again the wall rose up, an abyss yawned between them. Every word removed his father further, further, more and more irre-

vocably from him, as the dead recede from the living.

At last even the pain abated, again everything hardened within him. Again he felt indifferent, and was only wearied by the drowsiness produced by this lifeless voice, which no longer wounded, but only dragged over him like a blunt saw.

To put an end to it and escape, he chose the first moment of silence to give his answer which he had prepared long since, with the same expressionless voice and face as his father's.

"Most gracious Sovereign and Father, what else can I say, but that should you, because of my unfitness, take from me the inheritance of the Russian Crown, your will be done. I entreat you, my sovereign sire, most humbly let it be so! I consider myself incapable and unfit for the task, especially being deficient in memory, without which nothing can be done; and having grown weak in consequence of numerous ailments in body and soul, I cannot rule this great people, who need a stronger man than I can ever be. This is why I would desire to renounce all claim to the Russian throne even though I had no brother, but I have one, thanks to God. And I therefore in the sight of God finally renounce the Crown, and, if necessary, I am prepared to confirm the statement by my own handwriting. My children I leave to your good-will; as for myself, I only ask to be fed till my death."

Silence ensued. Nothing save the measured brass ticking of the hanging clock broke the hush of the wintry day.

"Your resignation is only a means to gain time, and is not sincere," Peter said at last, "for if now you neither fear nor respect your father's commands, how would you keep your word after his death? Your hardheartedness makes your oath of no value. David truly said, 'All men are liars.' Even if you yourself should desire to keep it, you could easily be influenced and prevailed upon by the 'long beards,' the priests and monks, who, because of their indolence are at present not held in high esteem, yet whom you favour exceedingly. It is impossible for you to remain as you desire, for you will be then neither fish nor fowl, but you must either change and clearly prove yourself

worthy of a throne, or else become a monk. We cannot rest unless this choice be made, especially now that our health is giving way."

Alexis remained silent, his gaze fixed on the ground, his face looking as lifeless as Peter's. One mask confronted the other, and both bore a sudden, strange, phantom-like semblance; two contrasts resembled one another. It seemed that Peter's round, wide, swollen face, reflected in the drawn haggard face of Alexis, as in a concave mirror, had become strangely narrow and long.

Peter too remained silent; his right cheek, the corner of his mouth and eye, the whole right side of his face began trembling, and twitching, until at last a convulsion ensued which contracted his face, neck, shoulder, arm and leg. Many supposed he was subject to epileptic fits, or was even possessed, because of these convulsive spasms which generally preceded fits of fury. Alexis could not as a rule look at his father without terror at such moments, but to-day he was calm, as if protected by an invisible, impenetrable armour. What more could his father do to him? Kill him! What matter? Was not what he had just done worse than murder?

"Why do you remain silent?" suddenly screamed Peter, banging his fist on the table, in one of those convulsive seizures which shook his whole body. "Take care, Alexis, you think I don't know you? But I do, I see you through and through! You have rebelled against your own blood, you brat! you long for your own father's death! O you hypocrite! You cursed sanctimonious humbug! You have probably learnt such behaviour from the priests and the monks! It was not for nothing that Christ ordered his disciples to fear nothing except this: 'beware of the leaven of the Pharisees,' which is no other thing than monkish hypocrisy and dissimulation!"

A malicious smile scarcely perceptible lighted up the downcast eyes of the Tsarevitch. He could hardly refrain from asking his father what was the meaning of the substitution of dates—October 11 for October 22—in the "Declaration to my son"? Where had the father learnt the arts of dissimulation, this deception, worthy of Petka the clerk, Petka the villain, or of Theodosius, the "Prince

of this world," with his "Divine intrigue," his "heavenly diplomacy" ?

"This is my last warning," continued Peter, his voice becoming hard again, calm, passionless ; he mastered his convulsions by a supreme effort of will, "consider it all well and when you have made a decision inform me at once of it, otherwise, be it known to you that I will disinherit you. Should my finger become gangrenous would I not be obliged to cut it off, though it be a part of my body ? So also will I cut you off ! And do not think that I speak this only to frighten you, verily I repeat it before God, I will do as I say, for I have not spared, nor do I spare, my life in the service of my country and people, and why should I spare you, who are worthless. Better a good stranger than a worthless son. This is why I repeat it, so that you may know that you may have these two alternatives clear : either mend your ways, or become a monk ! And should you fail to do either——"

Peter suddenly rose and stood before him in his full height. Again convulsions came upon him, his head shook, his hands and feet trembled, the death mask of a face, twitching with grotesque grimaces, and with its immovable feverish glance, was truly terrible. The hollow roar of an animal sounded in his voice :

"Should you fail to make a choice I shall proceed against you as against a malefactor !"

"I wish to become a monk, and pray for your gracious sanction," said the Tsarevitch in a low firm voice.

He lied. Peter knew that he lied ; and Alexis knew that he could not befooled his father. The wicked delight of revenge filled the soul of Alexis. His unbounded submissiveness was nothing but unbounded obstinacy. The son was now stronger than the father, the weak more powerful than the strong. What good could accrue to the Tsar, if his son became a monk ? The monk's cowl is not nailed to the head. It is possible to take it off. Yesterday a monk, to-morrow a Tsar. His father's body would turn in his grave when his son should become Tsar ; Alexis would scatter everything, destroy everything, he would bring Russia to perdition. It was not enough to seclude him in a monastery, he would have

to be killed, exterminated, wiped out from the face of the world.

"Go away!" moaned Peter with impotent fury.

The Tsarevitch lifted his eyes and stared at his father, without raising his head, as a young wolf would look at an old one, showing his teeth and bristling his hair. Their eyes met like two rapiers in a duel and the father's gaze dropped, as it were broke, like a blade against a hard stone.

And again he groaned like a wounded beast; he raised his fist and with an oath was going to throw himself on his son, beat and slay him.

Suddenly a small, delicate, strong hand was laid on Peter's shoulder.

The Tsaritsa Catherine had for a long time been listening at the door, trying to see through the keyhole what was going on. Catherine was inquisitive. As usual she appeared at the most dangerous moment to save her husband. She had pushed the door open noiselessly, and came up to him from behind on tiptoe.

"Peter, Peter," she began in a humble tone, slightly good humoured and coaxing, such as kind nurses adopt towards stubborn children or invalids, "don't tire yourself, Peter, don't excite yourself, my dear. Otherwise should you wear yourself out you will again fall ill and be obliged to lie up. And you, Tsarevitch, go, God be with you. You see the Tsar is unwell."

Peter turned round, he saw the calm, almost cheerful face of his wife, and at once he regained control of himself; his raised hands dropped limp at his side, and his huge, heavy body sank into a chair; fell like a full grown tree cut at the root.

Alexis continuing to look at his father from under his eyelashes, stooped bristling up like an enraged animal and slowly receded towards the door; only on the threshold did he turn round; then he opened the door and hurriedly left the room.

Meanwhile Catherine sat down on the arm of the chair, took Peter's head and pressed it against her large soft bosom, soft as the bosom of a foster-mother. Next to the yellow, withered, almost old face of her husband, Catherine looked quite young. She had a high colour and her cheeks

were covered with small downy moles which looked like beauty spots, pleasing dimples, dark arched eyebrows, carefully curled rings of black dyed hair on her low forehead, large protruding eyes and a continuous smile, such as ever adorns the portraits of royalty. On the whole, however, she less {resembled a Tsaritsa than a German waitress, or else the simple wife of a soldier, a laundress, as the Tsar himself called her, who accompanied her husband on all his campaigns, washing and sewing for him, and when he was ill made warm poultices for him, rubbed his stomach with ointment, supplied by Blumen-trost, and gave him medicine.

Nobody save Catherine knew how to tame these fits of fury, which were dreaded by all around him.

Holding his head with one hand, she fondled his hair with the other, repeating again and again the same words : " Peter, Peter, my dear one, my heart's treasure ! " She was like a mother rocking her sick child, or like a tamer of lions fondling her beast. Under the influence of this gentle continuous caress the Tsar always grew calm, as it were fell into a dose. The convulsions in his body abated, only his motionless face, now almost quite rigid, with the eyes closed, continued to twitch from time to time, as if grimacing.

A little monkey had followed Catherine into the room ; it was a present given to their youngest daughter Elizabeth by a Dutch captain. The mischievous monkey, following the Tsaritsa like a page, was trying to catch hold of the bottom of her dress. Noticing Lisette, it grew frightened, jumped first on the table, then on a sphere which represented the course of celestial bodies after the system of Copernicus, the thin brass arcs bent under the weight of the little animal, the globe of the universe gently tinkled, then higher still on to the very top of the upright English clock which stood in a glazed box of red mahogany. The last ray of sunlight caught the clock, and the moving pendulum flashed like lightning. The monkey had not seen the sun for a long while. As though trying to recall something, it looked with wistful amazement at the foreign, pale, wintry sun and screwed up its eyes and made grotesque faces, as if mocking the convulsions of Peter's face, and

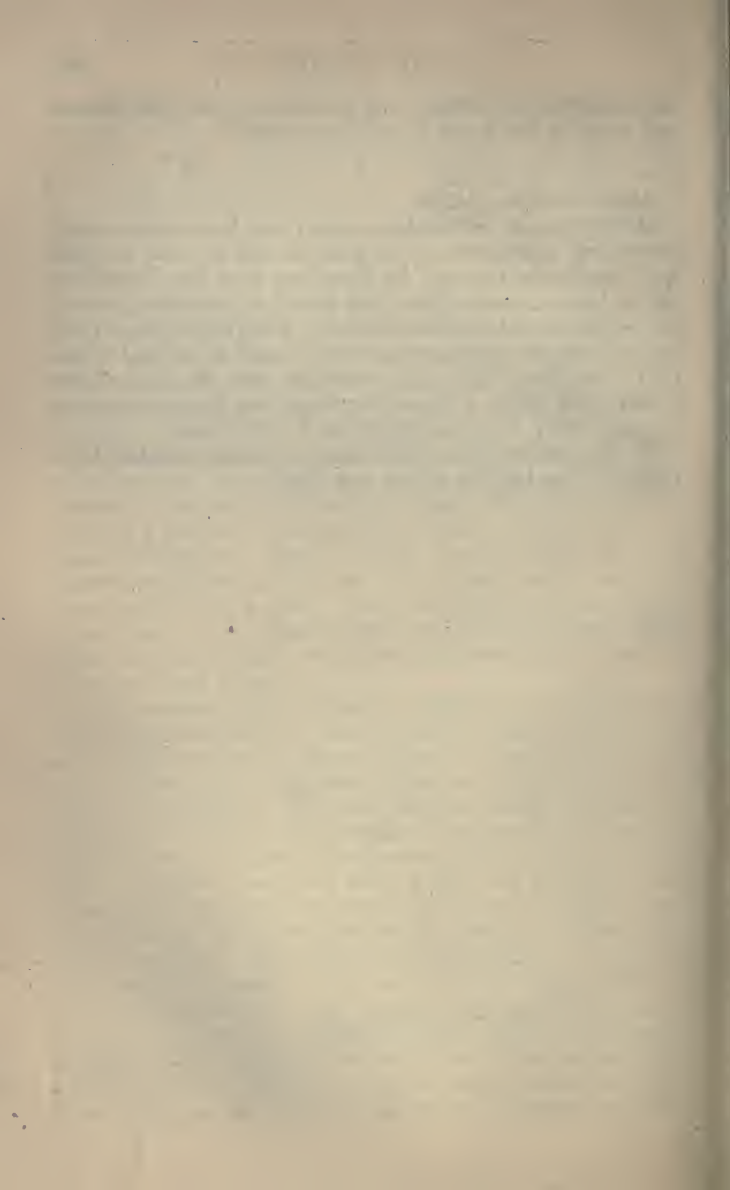
the resemblance between the grimaces of the little animal and those of the great Tsar was terrible.

* * * * *

Alexis returned home.

He felt as one whose leg or arm had been amputated ; recovering consciousness he tries to feel for the missing limb and finds it gone. In the same way the Tsarevitch felt in his soul, once filled with love for his father, a void. He remembered his father's words " I will sever you —I will lop you off like a gangrenous limb," and it seemed to him that everything had gone when he lost the love of his father. He felt a void, neither hope, nor fear, nor sorrow, nor joy, but a light terrible void.

He was amazed how swiftly and easily his wish had been fulfilled : for him his father was dead.



Book V

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

CHAPTER I

“**I**T was the will of God, Your Highness, that a great fire should visit Moscow in 1701, while the Tsar was at Voronesh building ships. In this fire the whole of the Tsar’s residence in the Kremlin was burnt : the wooden buildings, the inner parts of those built of stone ; churches, together with their crosses, roofs, screens and the holy images themselves—all were ablaze. The belfry of the Great John Tower caught fire, and the bell, weighing 8,000 poods, fell to the ground and broke. So did that in the Cathedral of the Assumption and sundry other bells. And in places the earth itself was burning.”

Thus spake to the Tsarevitch Alexis the sacristan of the Annunciation Church, an old man of seventy.

Peter had gone abroad shortly after his illness on January 27, 1716 ; the Tsarevitch remained alone in Petersburg. Receiving no further intimation from Peter, he dallied with the alternative left him by his father, either to fit himself for the duties of the throne or to become a monk, and he continued to live from day to day “till God should order otherwise.” He had spent the winter in Petersburg ; spring and summer in Roshdestveno ; in the autumn he went to Moscow to see his relatives.

On September 10, the eve of his departure, he paid a visit to his old friend, the sacristan, husband of his wet nurse, and together they went to view the palace in the Kremlin, which had been destroyed by fire.

For a long time they wandered about the seemingly endless ruins, from hall to hall and terem to terem. What the flames had spared time was destroying. There were halls without doors, windows or floors, so that it was impossible to enter them ; and in the walls huge gaps appeared, while the ceilings and roofs were crumbling. It was with difficulty Alexis could find the rooms in which he had spent his childhood.

He divined the unexpressed belief of Father John, that the fire, occurring in the same year in which the Tsar had begun to break down the old ways, was a sign of God's wrath.

They entered a dilapidated private chapel, where Ivan the Terrible had prayed for the son he had slain.

A deep blue sky, such as only canopies ruins, peered through the rent in the ceiling. Iridescent cobwebs bridged the gap, and through them could be seen a cross which, snapped by the wind, was suspended by half-broken chains, and so threatening to fall at any moment. The wind had broken the mica windows, and crows flying in through the holes had built their nests in the ceilings and messed the screens. White streams of their droppings streaked the dark faces of the saints ; one half of the holy gates was torn off ; in the sanctuary at the foot of the altar stood a pool of water.

Father John told the Tsarevitch how the priest of the chapel, a centenarian, had long petitioned the Public Offices, Departments, and even the Tsar himself, that the structure should be repaired, because, owing to the age of the ceiling, the leakage had increased to a great extent, there was danger the Eucharist would be exposed to the elements. But nobody listened to him ; he died of sorrow, and the chapel fell into ruins.

Crows, scared by their entrance, flew up with ominous cries ; through the windows the wind moaned and sobbed. A spider ran to and fro in his web. Something started from the altar—apparently a bat—and began to circle round the head of the Tsarevitch. He felt terrified, and lamented the state into which the church had fallen ; to his mind came the prophet's words about "the abomination of desolation in the holy places."

Passing the golden rails, along the front gallery of the grand staircase, they descended and entered the Granovitaia Palace, which had been less damaged than the others. But in place of the receptions to foreign ambassadors, or levées, originally held there, the palace was now used for the performance of new comedies and dialogues, and also for buffoon weddings. And to prevent the old interfering with the new, the existing writing on the walls had been covered with whitewash, and daubed over with a gay ochre pattern in the new "German style."

In one of the lumber rooms on the ground floor Father John pointed out two stuffed lions. Alexis at once recognized them as the familiar objects of his childhood. During the reign of Tsar Alexis Michailovitch the lions were placed near the throne in the Kolomna Palace, where they belled, rolled their eyes, and opened their jaws like live beasts. Their brass bodies had been covered with sheepskins in lieu of lions' skins. The mechanism, which had once produced the "leonine roaring" and moved their jaws and eyes, was secreted in a separate closet, where the bench with bellows and springs had been fitted up. The lions had probably been brought to the Kremlin for repairs, and forgotten here amid the lumber of the storehouse; the springs were broken, the bellows torn, the skins had fallen off; rotten bastwisp was protruding from their sides, and pitiful, indeed, now looked these sometime terrible playthings of former Russian autocrats—their muzzles expressing blank sheepishness.

In some of the halls, which had fallen into disuse, although they had escaped the rages of the flames, new departments had been installed. Thus in those facing the quay, formerly known as the "Obituary" and "Responsory," the Treasury was now established. Under the terems the Senate Department. In the Commissariat the Salt Office, the Military Department, the Uniform and War Offices. In the old stable was now the Cloth and Ammunition Stores.

Each department had been installed, not only with its archives, officials, porters and petitioners, but also with its prisoners, who remained confined for years in the rooms on the ground floor. These new-comers swarmed armed and

wriggled in the old palace like worms in a dead body, causing much foulness.

"All the dung and waste litter from privies, stables and prisoners," explained Father John, "pollute the air, and expose to no small danger the Royal Treasury and costly plate, stored in the palace these many years; because from all that filth there rises a fetid air, which might harm the gold and silver vessels by tarnishing them. Would that the dirt were cleared away and the prisoners located elsewhere! Much have we begged and prayed, but no one heeds," the old man concluded sorrowfully.

It was Sunday; the courts were empty. A heavy smell filled the air; on the walls were the greasy marks of the petitioners' backs, while ink stains, ribald writings and drawings caught the eye everywhere. And above, from the old faded gilt frescoes, the faces of prophets, Church fathers and Russian saints remained to look down on the scene.

Within the precincts of the Kremlin, hard by the palaces and churches adjoining the Tainisky Gate, stood the tavern called "The Roller." It was so named because of the steep and smooth descent of the Kremlin Hill at this place. The tavern, which had grown up like a toadstool, was frequented by the clerks and copyists. For many years it had flourished in secret, notwithstanding the orders "to exclude from the Kremlin the aforesaid tavern without delay, and that the income from the sale of liquor might not suffer to permit the opening of other taverns at discretion in more convenient and fitting places."

The air was so close in one of the halls, the Tsarevitch hastened to open a window. From the "Roller," crowded with customers, rose up a wild, almost bestial roaring, the noisy sound of dancing, music and drunken song, and the words of a notorious song, one sung by the princess-abbess at his father's banquets:—

My mother bore me while she danced,
And christened me in the Tsar's tavern,
And bathed me in the headiest wine.

To the Tsarevitch it seemed that "The Roller" was some dark yawning pit, whence, together with this song thus

degrading motherhood, and the smell of drink, there was exhaled a stifling odour which filled the royal halls, causing sickness, dizziness and a sinking at the heart.

He lifted his eyes to the vaulted ceiling of the hall. On its surface were depicted "the heavenly bodies," the lunar and solar circles, angels ministering to the stars, and other works of God. There was also a picture of Christ Emmanuel, enthroned on heavenly rainbows, with many-eyed wheels; in his left hand the golden chalice, in his right the staff; on his head a coigned crown, and on a gold field tinted with green, ran the inscription:—

"Pre-existent Word of the Father, Thou who art in the image of God, and through whom all things were made, grant peace to Thy churches, and victory to the faithful Tsar!"

But from below there came again the song:—

"My mother bore me while she danced,
And christened me in the Tsar's tavern."

The Tsarevitch read the inscription in the solar circle, "The sun knew the time of his setting . . . and it was night." These words flashed on his mind with a new significance. The ancient sun of the Muscovy kingdom knew the time of his setting in the dark Finnish bog, in the rotten autumnal mire; and it was night, not the black, but the terrible white Petersburg night. The ancient sun grew dim, the ancient gold crown and "Barma of Monomachus" were tarnished in the new but noxious air. And the abomination of desolation stood in the holy place.

As if to escape from some invisible pursuer he rushed from the palace, and, without looking back, fled along corridors, galleries and down the stairs, leaving Father John far behind, never stopping until he reached the square, where once more in the open he could breathe freely. Here the autumn air was pure and fresh, and the old white stones of the churches seemed pure and fresh also.

In the corner by the walls of the Annunciation Church stood a low bench, where Father John used often to sit, sunning himself.

On this bench the Tsarevitch dropped exhausted, while

the old man went in to prepare for his night's rest. The Tsarevitch remained alone. He felt terribly tired, as if he had journeyed a thousand miles. He could have wept, but no tears would come. His heart was burning, and his tears dried up, like water dropped on a glowing stone. The white walls were bathed in a peaceful evening light. The golden cupolas of the churches caught by the setting sun were ablaze, like living embers. The sky became lilac-hued, and as it darkened it resembled the colour of a faded violet; the white towers stood out like gigantic flowers with flaming crowns. The old clocks rang forth the hour—the rapid ding-dong of many smaller bells chiming in half-tones to the steady booming of the hour-bell—their confused medley of sounds producing a solemn, if somewhat harsh, church music. Meanwhile the modern Dutch clocks replied with melodious jingling and modern dance music, “after the manner of Amsterdam.”

And all these old and modern sounds brought back to the Tsarevitch's mind his distant childhood. He closed his eyes, and his mind sank into drowsiness—into that dark domain where, betwixt sleep and waking, hover the shadows of the past. Visions floated before him, like motley shadows on a white wall when a sunbeam enters a dark room through a chink. One awe-inspiring image dominated them all—his father. And as a traveller, looking back at night from a summit, beholds in a flash of lightning all the road he has traversed, so the relentless light from that figure laid bare his whole life.

Alexis' childhood

CHAPTER II

HE is six years old. They are watching the procession from an ancient gilded coach with mica windows, which is as clumsy and jolting as a farmer's cart. The inside is hung with clove-coloured velvet and brocade curtains. Here he sits on his grandmother's knee amidst downy cushions, with his nurses, and maids, plump as pillows. His mother, the Tsaritsa Eudoxia, is there too, dressed in a stomacher and a pearl-embroidered gown. Her round white countenance, like the eager face of a child, wore a look of continuous surprise.

Through the curtain and the open window of the coach, he witnesses the triumphal procession of the troops on their return from the Azov campaign. He is delighted with the regular lines of the regiments as they march past, the brass guns flashing in the sunshine, and the shields with their roughly drawn allegories. He remembers two of them. One pictured a pair of Turks chained together, bearing the inscription :—

“ Calamity overtook us
When Azov was lost to us.”

The other depicted upon a sea of startling blue the god Neptune, a red-hued man astride a monster with green scales. He is made to brandish a harpoon and say :—

“ We compliment you on the taking of Azov and tender you our submission.”

He admires the German scholar Vinnius, attired in Roman military dress, who is declaiming Russian verses by the aid of a tube, four yards long. In the ranks, side by side with the common soldiers' walks a bombardier of the Preobrazhensky Regiment. He wears a dark green coat with red lapels and a three-cornered hat. He is taller than the rest,

and is conspicuous from a distance. Alexis knows him to be his father, but his face is so youthful, almost childlike, that he seems in reality only an elder brother, a dear comrade, a little boy just like himself. It feels very stuffy in the carriage among the downy pillows and plump nurses. He longs to get out into the sunshine, and join that bright, curly-headed, quick-eyed boy.

The father sees his son, they smile at one another and Alexis' heart beats with joy. The Tsar approaches the carriage doors, opens them, and takes his son almost by force from the grandmother's arms, amid the exclamations of the nurses—he embraces and kisses him tenderly, more tenderly than a mother, then lifting him high in his hands, he shows him to the army and the people, and finally placing him on his shoulders, he bears him aloft above the regiments. At first quite near, then further and further away, across the sea of heads, like a peal of thunder rolled the joyful cry from thousands of voices :

“Vivat, vivat, vivat ! Long live the Tsar and Tsarevitch !”

Alexis feels that they all look at him, that all love him. He feels frightened and yet happy. He holds tightly to his father's neck, and nestles closer to him ; his father carries him so carefully that there is no fear he will drop him. And it seems to him that his father's movements are his, his father's strength his too, and that he and his father are one. He is ready to laugh and cry, so joyful are the shouts of the people, the roar of cannon, the chiming of bells, the golden cupolas, the blue sky, and the sun. His head goes round and round, he is short of breath, he seems to fly straight up into the sky, towards the sun !

He sees his grandmother's head leaning out of the carriage window, her kind old wrinkled face looks so droll and yet so dear to him. She beckons with her hand and calls out, beseeching almost in tears :

“Peter, Peter, dear, don't tire Alexis !”

And again his nurses put him to bed, and cover him with a golden damask quilt, lined with the softest sable ; they fondle and caress him and gently stroke his feet, to make him sleep the sweeter. They tuck him in securely against the slightest breeze. As one guards the apple of the eye, so

they watched over him, the Tsar's own babe. He is secluded, like a fair maiden, behind the inevitable curtains which, when he goes to church, surround him on all sides so that no one should see the Tsarevitch, until he is "proclaimed," according to an ancient custom, and after his proclamation people will flock from distant parts to have a look at him, as at some prodigy.

It is close in the low terem rooms ; the doors, shutters, windows, stoppers, all are carefully nailed round with felt to exclude the least draught. The floor is also covered with felt for "warmth and quiet." The glazed stoves are overheated. The air is saturated with spirit of yarrow and calamus, which is added to the fuel "for scent." The daylight, penetrating through the slanting mica panes, changes to a yellow-amber. Little lamps glimmer everywhere before the images. Alexis feels languid, but at the same time happy and snug ; he seems to be ever dozing and cannot wake. He dozes listening to the monotonous conversations about the ordering of a godly household : everything should be kept in its place, clean, swept, secured from all damage lest it might rot or go mouldy ; everything should be kept locked up, and not open to theft or waste ; the good should receive honour ; and severity should be the lot of the evil doers ; and how to be careful with the scraps, how to twine bast round split and dried fish, how to preserve different sorts of soaked mushrooms in tubs, and how to maintain an ardent faith in the undivided Trinity. He dozes while listening to the wailing sounds of stringed instruments played by blind bards who are chanting old legends, and to the narratives of old men whose tales had once amused his grandfather, Tsar Alexis Michailovitch. He slumbers—and the tales of pilgrims and mendicants bring him vivid visions, of Mount Athos, pointed like a fir-cone, on its summit above the clouds, stand the Holy Virgin spreading her cloak about it ; of Simeon Stylites who allowed his body to rot till it was alive with worms ; of the place where the earthly Paradise stood, which Moisláv of Nóvgorod had seen afar off from his ship, and of many another divine wonder and diabolic suggestion. When he feels dull, by order of his grandmother all sorts of jesters, orphan girls, Kalmuck women, blackamoors dance before him, fight, roll on the

floor, pull at one another's hair, and scratch one another. Or again his grandmother would take him on her lap, and begin to play with his fingers, touching them one after another, starting from the thumb, repeating the little nursery rhyme, "A magpie crow, having boiled some gruel, hopped to the door and invited his guests. She gave to this and she gave to that and none was left to feed the last." And then she would tickle him, and he would laugh and try to shield himself. She overfeeds him with rich pancakes, onion patties, "levashnik," sour apple fritters fried in nut oil, gruel boiled in poppyseed milk, white gruel, pears and burrels in syrup.

"Eat! Alexis, eat, it's good for you, my treasure!"

And when Alexis suffered from stomach-ache a wise woman would be summoned, whose incantations were supposed to benefit the tender young. She knew herbs which cure internal ailments and epileptic fits. Whenever Alexis sneezed or coughed, they at once would give him raspberry tea, rub him with camphorated wine-spirit or make him sweat in a bath prepared with althea.

Only on the hottest days is he taken out for a walk in the beautiful "Upper Garden," laid out on a wooden platform inside the Kremlin. This imitation of the hanging gardens is a continuation of the Terem. Here everything is artificial: hothouse flowers in boxes, tiny ponds in tubs, and tame birds in cages. He looks down and forth on Moscow which lies spread at his feet; he sees streets he had never been in, roofs, towers, belfries, the distant town beyond the Moscow stream, the bluish outlines of the Sparrow hills, and over all the airy gilded clouds. And he feels weary; he longs to get out of the Terem, out of the toy garden away to real forests, fields and rivers, away into the unknown distance; he is eager to run, to fly like the swallows whose flight he envies. It is very close and heavy. The hothouse flowers, and medicinal herbs, marjoram, thyme, savory, hyssop, tansy, fill the air with a spicy and sickly perfume. A cloud of leaden hue creeps slowly up, fast thronging shadows fall around him, a fresh breeze sweeps past and it begins to rain. He stretches out his face and hands and greedily tries to catch the drops, while his nurses in great agitation are already searching for him.

"Alexis, Alexis, come in, child, you'll get your feet wet."

But Alexis does not heed them ; he hides among the sweet-briar bushes. The air is now filled with a scent of mint, dill, and moist earth ; the foliage glistens in its fresh green, the double peonies glow like balls of fire. A last ray of sunshine pierces the cloud, and the sun mingling with the rain forms one tremulous net of gold. He is already wet through. Yet he delights in watching the heavy drops break into radiant dust, as they splash on the surface of the pools. He jumps, skips, and sings a gay song to the patter of the rain, which resounds in the hollow vault of the water tower—

" Cease, gentle rain,
Lest we should yearn in vain
To reach the river Jordan's banks
And bring to God and Christ our thanks !"

Suddenly right above his head a blinding flash of lightning burst through the cloud, the thunder rolled, a whirling wind rose and died away. He felt again the same mingled sensation of joy and fear which once before possessed him, when his father carried him shoulder high during the triumph of the Azov campaign. To his mind came the bright curly-headed, quick-eyed boy, and he felt his father loved him just in the same way as he loved that terrible lightning. His breath came quick and short, he was delirious with joy. He fell on his knees and stretched both hands towards the black sky, fearing and yet wishing for another flash more awful and more blinding ; but trembling old hands already catch hold of him, carry him indoors, undress him and put him to bed ; he is rubbed with camphorated wine-spirit and made to drink medicated vodka and lime-tea, until he sweats seven times, and then they wrap him up and again he sleeps. And he dreams about that terrible slate dragon, who lives in the "Stone Mountains," and has a maiden's face, a serpent's mouth and nose, and the feet of a basilisk, with which he breaks the iron ; he can only be caught with the sound of a trumpet, for he is unable to bear it, and when its blast rings out, he pierces his ears and dies shedding a blue blood on the surrounding stones. Alexis dreams about the Siren, the bird of Paradise, singer of royal songs, denizen of Eden,

who tells of the joys which the Lord has in store for the Righteous. Not every one in the flesh can hear its voice, those who do, are so charmed that they follow its lead and pass peaceably away listening to its strains. Alexis believes that he too is following the singing Siren, and that while listening to its sweet melodies he is dying, sinking into eternal slumber.

Then suddenly it seems as if a hurricane swept into the room, threw open the door, curtains, hangings, tore the coverings off Alexis and sent a chill over him. He opened his eyes and saw his father's face. He was not in the least frightened, not even surprised; he seemed to have known and felt that he would come. The song of the Siren still ringing in his ears, with a sweet half dreamy smile he stretched out his hands and cried, "Daddy! daddy darling!" and threw his arms round his father's neck. His father embraces and hugs him, kissing his face, neck, naked feet and all his little warm sleepy body. His father had brought him from abroad a clever toy; in a wooden box with a glass cover, lo, four waxen figures, three dressed as foreign women and one as a child, stand before a mirror. Underneath is fixed a bone handle, which makes the women and child dance to a tune. Alexis is pleased with the toy, yet he hardly looks at it: his father absorbs all his attention. He soon notices a change in his father's countenance. The face has become thin and gaunt; he has grown more manly and seems taller. Yet to the child's gaze, tall as he is, he still remains the curly-headed quick-eyed boy of old. A smell of wine and fresh air comes from him.

"Daddy's moustache is showing! But how tiny the hairs are, they can hardly be seen."

And with curiosity he passes his little fingers over the black down on his father's lip.

"And you have a dimple on the chin, just like Granny!"

He kisses it.

"Why are Daddy's hands so hard?"

"It is from the axe, Alexis. I have been building ships beyond the seas. Wait until you grow up and I'll take you with me! Would you like to go across the seas?"

"Yes, I would. Where daddy goes, I would like to go too. I want to be with daddy always."

"And are you not sorry for granny?"

Here Alexis notices in the half-open door the frightened face of his grandmother, and his mother with a deadly pallor on her countenance. They both watch him from that distance, afraid to come nearer; they bless him and themselves with the sign of the cross.

"Yes, I am sorry for granny," murmurs Alexis, and at the same time he wonders why his mother is not mentioned.

"And whom do you love most, granny or me?"

Alexis does not answer immediately; it is difficult for him to decide. Suddenly clinging closer still to his father, trembling and shrinking in shy tenderness, he whispers in his ear:—

"I love daddy, love him more than any one!"

And suddenly all vanishes, the squat Terem, the downy bed, his mother, grandmother, and nurses. He seems to have fallen into some dark hole, like a bird from its nest, on to the hard frozen earth. He is in a large cold room with bare walls and iron-barred windows. He no longer dozes. On the contrary he is always longing for sleep; he cannot get enough, he is roused so early. Through a fog, which makes the eyes smart, loom long barrack buildings, earthen ramparts with pyramids of shot, muzzles of cannon, the Sokolinki field covered with grey thawing snow, dotted with wet crows and ravens, under a leaden sky. He hears the roll of the drums, the drill commands: "*Eyes front!*" "*Shoulder arms!*" "*Present arms!*" "*Right turn!*" the dry rattle of the musketry and again the roll of the drums. His aunt, the Tsarevna Natalia Alexyevna, is with him; an old maid with sallow face, bony fingers which hurt so in pinching, and cross piercing eyes which seems to eat him: She cries:—

"O scurvy brat of thy mother!"

It was not until long after he learnt what had actually happened. How the Tsar on his return from Holland had banished his wife, the Tsaritsa Eudoxia, to a nunnery, forcing her to take the veil under the name of Elena, while he removed his son from the Kremlin residence to the new Potieshny Palace in the village Preobrazhensky. Side by side with this palace were the torture-chambers of the Privy Chancery, where the trial of the Streltsi Mutiny took place.

They daily burnt more than thirty wood fires, at which the rebels were tortured. Was his remembrance true or only a nightmare ? He could no longer tell. It was as if he were stealing along the huge pointed piles of the wall which surrounded the prison ; groans issue from within, a streak of light reveals a chink in the log-built wall. He put his eye to the hole and saw a veritable hell :—

Hot fires are burning,
Cauldrons are steaming,
Knives are being sharpened,
All to butcher thee !

Human bodies are actually roasting over the fires ; they are slung on a post and so stretched that their joints crack ; their ribs are broken with red-hot tongs, and their nails are scraped with red-hot needles. The Tsar is among the torturers. His face is so terrible that Alexis can hardly recognize him—himself and yet not himself, rather his double, his “were-wolf.” He is examining one of the ring-leaders, who in stubborn silence endures all. His body already resembles a bloody carcass from which the butchers had torn off the skin, yet he remains dumb and looks defiantly straight into the Tsar’s eyes.

* * * * *

The boy Alexis swooned ; soldiers found him in the morning lying at the foot of the wall close to the moat. He lay unconscious for many days.

He had hardly recovered, when by command of the Tsar he had to be present at the dedication of the Lefort Palace to Bacchus. He wears a new German coat with stiff wired folds, and a huge wig which oppresses him. His aunt is in a gorgeous “robe ronde ; they are in a separate room, adjacent to the Banqueting Hall. Damask curtains, the last remnant of the Terem seclusion, hide them from the guests. Yet Alexis sees all that goes on among the members of “The Most Drunken Convocation,” whose insignia were cups of wine, flagons of mead and beer, instead of the Holy Vessels ; in place of the Gospels, a case shaped like a Bible containing different vodkas ; for incense, tobacco smouldering in braziers. The high priest, the Kniaz-Pope, attired

in mock vestments imitating those of a patriarch, trimmed with playing cards and dice, with a pewter mitre on his head crowned by a naked Bacchus, and in his hand a staff decorated with a naked Venus, blesses the guests with two pipes folded on the cross. The orgy begins. The buffoons revile the aged boyars; punching them, spitting in their faces, spilling wine over them, pulling their hair, cutting their beards or plucking them out by the roots. The revelry degenerates into an inquisition. As in some terrible nightmare Alexis beholds all this. And again he cannot recognise his father; rather it is his father's double, his evil genius!

"His Serene Highness, the Tsarevitch Alexis, beginning with the alphabet, and having in a short time mastered it, now, following the order of instructions, is learning the breviary," thus reported to the Tsar the tutor Nikíta Viásemiski, "his lowliest slave."

It was according to the Domostroi that he taught Alexis how to approach sacred things; the way to kiss wonder-working icons, and relics, taking heed not to moisten them with lips, nor to tarnish them with the breath, for the Lord dislikes our dirt and breath; how to eat the holy loaf without scattering crumbs on the ground, or biting it with the teeth like other bread, but breaking it into little pieces put them one by one into the mouth and so eat in faith and fear. Listening to these instructions of his tutor, Alexis could not help recalling how this same tutor at the Lefort Palace amongst the buffoons, in a drunken frenzy was used to dance before the foreign courtesan Mons, whistling and singing.

The learned Geman, Baron Huissen, presented a "Methodus instructionis" to the Tsar. "A syllabus to which he who shall be instructed with the education of the Tsarevitch must conform." "In his feelings and heart, at all times implant and strengthen love for virtue; also strive to inculcate in him disgust and repulsion for all that is called sin before God; adequately represent the heavy consequences that result from it, and exemplify by application from Holy Writ and profane history."

"Also instruct in the French language, which cannot be done better than by daily use. Show coloured geographical

maps. Gradually accustom to the use of the compasses, and indicate the importance and utility of geometry. Commence the preliminary military exercises, storming, dancing, and riding. Develop a good Russian style. Diligently read on all mail days the French newspapers and the 'Historical Mercury,' and present political and moral reflections thereon. Always use 'Fenelon's Telemachus,' in the instructions of his Highness, as a mirror and guide for his future government. And to prevent weariness by continual work and instructions, use for diversion in a moderate measure the game 'Truktafel.' This scheme can easily be completed in two years, and then his Highness without delay may proceed to perfect himself in general knowledge, so that he may be equipped for the thorough study of the world's politics, the real needs of this empire, all the useful sciences such as fortification, artillery, civic architecture, navigation, and so on, to his Majesty's complete satisfaction and his Highness's own immortal glory." To carry out this programme they chanced to hit upon a certain worthy named Martin Neubauer. He taught Alexis the rules of "European Compliments and Politeness," from a book entitled "The Youth's Mirror of Honour."

"Children must, above all, greatly honour their father. When a son receives instructions from his father, he should always stand hat in hand, not in the same line with his father but a little behind to one side, like a page or servant. When a son meets his father he ought to stop at a distance of three paces; take off his hat and greet him in an agreeable manner. It is better to be accounted a gracious cavalier, than a proud blockhead. Do not lean on tables or benches, like a peasant who delights to lounge in the sun. Youths must not sniff with their noses, nor blink with their eyes. And this also is no small nuisance, to blow one's nose like a trumpet or sneeze loudly, and so startle people or frighten young children at church. Keep your nails cut and don't let them suggest a velvet border. Behave well at table, sit upright; do not pick your teeth with a knife, but with a tooth-pick, and cover the mouth with your hand during the operation. Don't munch over your food like a pig; don't scratch your head, for even so do the peasants. Youths should always converse in foreign tongues among

themselves to gain a ready fluency, and also the better to distinguish themselves from the ignorant."

Thus droned into his august pupil's ear on one side the German; while from the other the Russian repeated:—"Don't spit to the right, Alexis, for that is your angel's side; always spit to the left, where Satan is. In dressing don't begin with your left foot, it is a sin. Carefully keep the parings of your nails in paper, to climb Zion's Hill with on your way to Heaven."

The German tutor sneered at the Russian and the Russian laughed at the German, and Alexis knew not whom to believe. The touchy student, a burgher's son from Dantzic, hated Russia. "What language is this?" he used to say. "It has neither rhetoric nor grammar. The Russian priests are themselves incapable of explaining what they read in the churches; only darkness and ignorance results from the Russian language." He was generally drunk, and in that state his diatribes increased.

"You know nothing, you are all barbarians! Dogs! dogs! rogues!"

The Russian mockingly called the German "Martin Marmoset," and informed the Tsar that instead of instructing the Tsarevitch he, Martin, set his Highness a bad example; creating in him a repugnance for learning and a horror of all foreigners. To Alexis both the Russian and German tutors were equally humbugs.

Sometimes Martin would weary him to such an extent during the day that even at night in his dreams he would come to him in the shape of a learned ape, which grimaced according to the rules of "European Compliments and Politeness" in front of "The Youth's Mirror of Honour." Around stood the figures from the Golden Hall, Moscow's ancient Tsars, patriarchs and saints. The ape mocked and tailed at them, "Dogs! dogs! rogues! None of you know anything, you are all barbarians!" And Alexis seemed to discern a likeness between this monkey face and another disfigured by convulsions, belonging not to the Tsar, but to that awful double of his, the were-wolf, his evil genius. And Alexis felt the shaggy paw stretched out to grasp him and drag him away.

And again the scene changed. Now it is the very end

of the world, a flat seashore, bogs with mossy hillocks, a pale lurid sun, and a low hanging oppressive sky. All is misty, phantomlike, and he himself seems but a phantom, who dead long ago, has descended into the realm of shadows.

At the age of thirteen the Tsarevitch joined the bombardier regiment and took part in the Noteburg campaign. From Noteburg to Ladoga, from Ladoga to Jamburg, Koporie and Narva he was dragged everywhere with the baggage waggon and train to familiarise him with military life. Although but a child, he shared dangers, privations, cold, hunger and weariness with the men. He saw the bloodshed, squalor and all the horrors and abominations of warfare. He caught glimpses of his father from afar; and every time he beheld him, his heart beat in wild anticipation, he might come to him, he might call for him, he might caress him. Just one word or a look and Alexis would have been roused to new life and have understood what was expected from him. But his father had no time to spare; his hand was ever occupied, now with a sword, now a quill, now a compass, now an axe. He waged war against the Swedes, and at the same time he was pile-driving for the first dwellings at Petersburg.

"My gracious Lord Father,—

"I pray thee grant me a favour and let me be informed by letter for my joy, about thy health, of which I always anxiously desire to hear.

"Thy son Alexis invokes thy blessing and presents his homage.

"Written in Petersburg, August 25, 1703."

He dared not add a single genuine word, whether of endearment or complaint, to the letters dictated by his tutor. He grew up a cowed, timid, lonely boy, like a weed in the moat round the arsenal wall.

Narva had been stormed. The Tsar celebrated the victory by reviewing his troops with music and salutes from the guns. In front stood the Tsarevitch, watching the young giant with his bright awe-inspiring face coming toward him, no longer his double, his evil genius, but himself, his own dear father. The boy's heart beat quicker, and again it throbbed with eager hope; their eyes met, and it was as if a lightning flash had blinded Alexis. His desire had been

to rush to meet his father, to throw his arms round his neck, embrace him, kiss him in a paroxysm of joy.

But sharp and decisive, like the rattle of the drum, were the words that greeted him, words so familiar in rescripts and articles.

"Son, the reason I took you with me on this campaign was to show you that I shrink from neither toil nor dangers. Being only mortal and liable to be summoned this day or to-morrow, I charge you to remember that you shall taste little joy if you shun to follow my example. Shun no toil for the common weal! But should you cast my advice to the wind, and refuse to do as I bid you, then I will deny you as my son, and will implore God to punish you in this life and the life to come."

The father takes hold of the boy's chin between his two fingers and looks intently into his eyes. A cloud passes over Peter's face. He seems to see his son, such as he really is, for the first time: this weakly lad with sloping shoulders and narrow chest, with his stubborn and morose looks—is he indeed his only son, the heir of the throne, with whom the culmination of all his schemes and toil will rest? Can it be? Whence came this puny starveling, this raven, into the eagle's nest? How could he be the father of such a son?

Alexis shrank into himself and strove to efface himself, as if he guessed his father's thoughts, and was guilty before him of some crime unknown and irreparable. He felt so ashamed and terrified that he was ready to burst out crying like a child before the assembled army. But mastering himself with a supreme effort, he uttered in a trembling voice the salutation he had been made to learn.

"Most gracious Lord Father, I am very young at present and do what I can, but your Majesty may be assured that, as a dutiful son, I will strive with all my might to imitate your actions and example. May God keep you for many years to come in perfect health and thus grant that I may long continue in the enjoyment of so illustrious a parent!"

And then, according to the instructions of Martin, uncovering his head in an agreeable manner, like a gracious cavalier, he makes a German bow, saying:—

"Meines gnädigsten Papas gehorsamster Diener und

Sohn." He knew he looked like a puny, deformed, silly monkey, in front of this giant, handsome as a young god. The father proffers his hand, the son kisses it. Tears burst from the boy's eyes, and it seemed to him that his father feeling the warm tears pulls away his hand in disgust.

At the triumphal entry into Moscow on December 17, 1704, to celebrate the Narva victory, the Tsarevitch marched with the Preobrazhensky regiment shouldering his gun like a common soldier. The frost was intense. The boy was nearly starved to death with the cold. In the palace at the usual orgies he drank a glass of vodka to warm himself, and at once became drunk. His head went round, it grew dark, blurred red and green circles danced before his eyes; only one thing he saw clearly, the face of his father who was looking at him with a disdainful smile. Alexis was cut to the quick. He got up and with unsteady steps, lurched towards his father; he looked at him furtively like a young wolf at bay, tried to say something, but suddenly turned pale, shrieked, staggered forward and fell at his father's feet.

Alexis needs unearned love from his father as a snuff box. He asks to fulfill his father's demands made of him but he can't. Peter is disappointed. His son is worthy of his father's love when Peter will love him.

CHAPTER III

“**A**LREADY my earthly life is drawing to a close : my voice is going, I am growing deaf and blind. I beseech you to relieve me from my office of sacristan, grant me permission to end my days in a monastery!”

The Tsarevitch, lost in dream-memories, scarcely noticed the monotonous wail of Father John, who returning from his cell sat down beside him on the bench.

“My small house, chattels and superfluous furniture, could be sold; my two orphaned nieces placed in some nunnery, and the little money I have scraped together, I would bring as my gift to the monastery. Thus I would not live on the bounty of others ; and my offerings might be acceptable to God, like the two mites of the widow. Then I might live for a little while in silence and repentance, until God wills to take me from this into eternal life. I feel that I have reached the end of my span, for even so did my parent die at the same age——”

Awakening, as from a deep slumber, the Tsarevitch saw it was night. The white church towers, tinged with palest blue, more than ever suggested gigantic flowers, huge lilies of paradise ; the golden domes shone silvery in heaven’s dark blue vault, studded with stars. The Milky Way glimmered but faintly. And the fresh breezes of heaven, even as the breathing of a slumberer, seemed to bring with them from the heavens a foreboding of eternal rest, and unbroken quietude. The slow murmuring words of Father John mingled with the stillness :—

“Give me but leave to go to my resting place, a holy monastery, and let me live in silence until the time that I shall be taken hence——”

He continued to mumble for some time, stopped, again resumed, went away ; and soon returning called the Tsare-

vitch to supper. Alexis had again closed his eyes and fallen into that dark dreamy abode, where twixt sleep and waking hover the shadows of the past. Again memories, visions, image after image passed before him, like a long chain, link after link ; above them all towered one awe inspiring image, his Father. And as a wanderer looking back at night from a summit beholds in a flash of lightning all the road he has traversed, so the relentless light from that figure laid bare his whole life.

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He is seventeen, at the age when in olden days the Tsarevitch was proclaimed to the people, who would flock from all parts to gaze at him, as at some wonder. But on Alexis a man's toil is imposed, too heavy for his young strength ; he is perpetually travelling from town to town, buying provisions for the army, felling and despatching timber for the fleet, printing books, casting cannon, writing ukases, levying armies, searching for young deserters under penalty of death—himself only a lad relentlessly executing the law on those of his own age ; he supervises everything to prevent defalcations of any kind.

He hurries from German declensions to fortifications, from garrisons to orgies ; from orgies to deserters, until his brain is in a whirl. The more he attempts the more is demanded. He has neither leisure nor rest. He feels ready to drop like an over-ridden hack. And at the same time he knows that his efforts are all in vain ; it is impossible for him ever to please his father.

At the same time he continues his studies, as if he were a schoolboy. "Two weeks shall be devoted to the German language, to master well the declensions, and then attention shall be given to French and arithmetic. Instruction to take place each day."

At last his strength gave way. During the severe frost in January 1709, he was bringing to his father, then at Suma in the Ukraine, five regiments from Moscow which he had himself levied and which were destined to take part in the battle of Poltava. On the journey he caught cold, fell ill, and lay for weeks insensible. His life was despaired of.

He regained consciousness one sunny morning, early in

spring. Slanting rays of sunlight flooded the room. Snow was lying outside, wet drops hung already on the icicle tips. Brooks were murmuring on their way, and from the sky the lark showered his song in melodious strains. Alexis sees his father's face bent over him, the one so dear to him in years gone by, a face full of tenderness.

"My son, my love, do you feel better?"

Too weak to answer Alexis can but smile.

"Well, glory and thanks be to God!" exclaims his father piously. "The Lord hath shown mercy upon me and heard my prayer. Now you will soon be well!"

Alexis was told later that his father never left him during the whole of his illness. Neglecting all other work, he had spent night after night without sleep. When the patient grew worse, he ordered the celebration of mass and made a vow to erect a church in the name of "St. Alexis, the man of God."

Then came the slow joyful days of convalescence. To Alexis his father's caresses were as health-giving as the warm bright sunshine. In blissful lassitude, with a pleasurable weakness in his body, he would lie the whole day long without moving. He was never tired of looking at his father's grand open countenance, his bright, fierce yet tender eyes, and the charming, slightly cunning smile on those finely-curved lips. The father could not do enough to show his love to Alexis. Once he brought him a small snuff-box carved by himself out of ivory, with the inscription, "A small gift, but from a loving heart." Many a year the Tsarevitch had kept it, and every time he looked at it, something burning, poignant, akin to measureless pity for his father would surge up within him.

Another time while gently caressing his son's hair, Peter said in a timid shy voice, as if excusing himself, "If ever I said or did anything that hurt you, for God's sake remember it no longer and do not sorrow over it. Forgive me, Alexis! Petty annoyances are sufficient to arouse anger in an arduous life, and my life is indeed hard. I have no one to consult, not even a single helper."

Alexis, as in the days of his childhood, threw his arm round his father's neck and all trembling and melting in shy tenderness whispered in his ear:—

"Daddy darling, I love you ! I love you !"

But in proportion as he returned to health, so his father once more receded from him. There seemed to be a merciless fate upon them both, to be companions and yet strangers ; secretly loving, while openly estranged and hating one another.

And again all things fell back into the old ruts : the collection of provisions, detection of deserters, casting of cannon, felling of timber, building battlements, wandering from town to town. Again Alexis toiled like a convict and his father remained as ever dissatisfied, even suspecting his son of laziness, "leaving off work, running after idleness." Sometimes Alexis would like to remind him of what happened at Suma, but he could never bring himself to do it.

"Son, we instruct you to depart for Dresden. During your sojourn in that city we command you to live honestly and apply yourself diligently to studies : especially languages, geometry and fortification, and also partly to political science. And inform us by letter when geometry and fortification have been successfully acquired."

Abroad the Tsarevitch lived like an exile, neglected by everyone. His father again forgot his existence ; he did not remember him save when he wanted to marry him to Princess Charlotte of Wolfenbüttel. The Tsarevitch had no liking for his bride ; he had no wish whatever to marry a foreigner. "Why did they force this devil of a wife on me?" he used to cry out when flushed with wine.

Before the nuptials he had to conduct humiliating negotiations about his bride's dowry. Peter was eager to squeeze as much money as possible out of the Germans.

Six months after his marriage Alexis left his wife for another tour : from Stettin to Mecklenburg, from Mecklenburg to Abo, from Abo to Novgorod, from Novgorod to Ladoga—again interminable fatigue, interminable fears.

The dread he felt before each interview with his father developed into a nervous terror. Approaching the door of his father's room he would mutely repeat a prayer : "Remember, O God, King David and all his humility !" he would jerk out disconnected fragments of lessons on navigation, it being beyond his power to remember the barbarous terminology of such words as . "krup-kamer, balk-vegerse,

haigen-blok (anchor-stock)," and he would fumble for his amulet, the gift of his nurse, a blade of grass embedded in wax, with a paper bearing an ancient charm to soften the anger of a father:—

"On a momentous day was I born. I fenced myself with iron, and went unto my father. My parent became wrathful, began to break my bones, to pinch my body, to trample on me with his feet, and drink my blood. Bright sun, clear stars, still sea, ripe fields! Ye all stand peaceful and still. May my father throughout all his hours and days, his nights and midnights, be as quiet and still as ye!"

"Well, my son, I must say this is a first-rate fortress," said his father with a shrug of his shoulders, looking at his son's plan. "You have apparently learnt a great deal abroad."

Alexis grew only more confused, and winced like a guilty schoolboy before the rod.

To escape such torture at times he used to take medicine and "feign illness."

Terror was merging into hatred.

Just before the Pruth campaign, Peter fell seriously ill, "he did not expect to live." When the news reached Alexis he experienced for the first time a feeling of pleasure at the possible death of his father. This joy frightened him; he banished it but could not destroy it; it hid itself at the bottom of his heart, ready to spring forth like a lurking beast.

One day at a feast when Peter, as was his wont, made his drunken guests quarrel with one another so that he might learn from their recriminations the thoughts of those around him, Alexis, also drunk, began to talk about the state of the empire, and the oppression of the people. All grew silent, even the buffoons stopped their shouting. The Tsar listened attentively. Alexis' heart was beating with hope, what if he were heard? understood?

"Enough of this nonsense!" the Tsar stopped him suddenly with that mocking smile, so familiar and hateful to Alexis. "I perceive, my boy, that you know as much about political and civic affairs as a bear does of a hand-organ."

And turning aside Peter signed to the fools to resume their shouting. Ménshikov with other nobles, all drunk,

began to dance. The Tsarevitch continued to speak in a high-pitched voice. But his father, paying him no attention, was stamping, clapping and whistling to the dancers :—

“Tare-bare, rastobare!
White snow was falling,
Grey hares were running,
Hurry ! hurry up !”

His face was that of a soldier, unrefined, the rugged face of him who wrote : “The enemy received such good treatment from us that only a few infants survived.”

Suddenly Prince Ménshikov, breathless with dancing, stopped short before the Tsarevitch, his hands on his hips and on his lips an impertinent smile—a reflection of the Tsar’s.

“Tsarevitch,” he cried, pronouncing the word, so that it meant an insult, “Tsarevitch, why are you melancholy ? Come, join our dance !”

Alexis grew pale and seized his sword, then bethought himself, and turned aside ejaculating :—

“Rapscaillon !”

“What ? What did you say, puppet ?”

Alexis turned round and, looking him straight in the face, said in a loud voice :—

“I said, ‘Rapscaillon !’ A rascal’s look is worse than defilement !”

At the same moment his father’s face, contorted, flashed before him. He struck his son so hard in the face that the blood gushed from mouth and nose ; then he caught him by the throat, threw him on the ground and began to strangle him. The senior nobles, Romadonóvski, Sheremétiev, Dolgorúki, who were authorized by the Tsar himself to restrain him in his attacks of madness, fell upon Peter, seized him, and dragged him away from his son, lest he should murder him.

“In order to give satisfaction” to Ménshikov, the Tsarevitch was sent from the hall and placed on sentry duty at the doors like a naughty schoolboy who is sent into the corner. It was a cold winter’s night, frosty and snowing ; he had only his kaftan on, and no fur coat. Tears and

blood froze on his face. The wind moaned and whirled round and round, like a drunkard dancing and singing. And behind the lighted windows, in the room he had left, that old buffoon, the drunken princess-abbess Rshevsky was also dancing and singing. The wild moans of the storm mingled with the wild strains of the song :—

My mother bore me while she danced,
She christened me in the Tsar's tavern,
And bathed me in the headiest wine.

Such anguish filled Alexis that he felt like braining himself against the wall.

Suddenly some one crept up to him in the dark and, throwing a fur-lined coat round his shoulder, fell on his knees before Alexis and began to kiss his hands like some affectionate dog ; it was an old soldier of the Preobrazhensky regiment, who happened to be on the same watch—a secret Raskolnik.

The old man looked up with such love to Alexis as though he would sacrifice his soul for him ; he cried and whispered to him as in adoration :—

“ Lord Tsarevitch, our light and sunshine, poor orphan, no father nor mother ! May the Heavenly Father and the pure Virgin protect and keep thee ! ”

Alexis had often been beaten, with or without ceremony, with fist or cane. In everything else the Tsar followed the new ideas. Only his son he beat according to the old tradition, following the advice of Father Sylvester, author of the *Dómostroi*, councillor to the Tsar Ivan the Terrible, (who killed his son, you remember).

“ Do not let your son gain mastery in his youth, but beat him as he grows. Strike him with a stick, it won't kill, but make a man of him ! ”

Alexis shrank in bodily fear from the blows, “ He will kill, maim me ” ; but the moral suffering and shame he had grown used to. At times a hard joy kindled within him, “ Well ! what of it ! Strike me, it is you who are shamed, not I, ” he seemed to say to his father, fixing on him a look at once infinitely submissive and infinitely insolent.

His father probably divined this, for he ceased beating

him and devised another punishment. He broke off all intercourse with him. When Alexis addressed him, he remained silent, pretended not to hear, looked past him, as into space. The silence would last weeks, months, years. Alexis was conscious of it at all times and wherever he went. It grew more intolerable, more insulting than scolding, more terrible than blows. He felt it to be slow murder, a cruelty which neither man nor God could wipe out.

This sheer silence was the end of everything. Beyond, there was nothing but darkness, and through the darkness he saw the immovable face of his father, motionless as a stone mask, as it had appeared at their last interview. And the terrible words coming from lips that were dead to him : " I'll cut you off like a gangrenous limb ! "

* * * * *

The thread of reminiscence snapped ; he opened his eyes. The night was as quiet as ever ; the white church towers were still wrapped in a bluish haze. The golden domes shone silvery in heaven's dark blue vault, studded with stars ; the Milky Way glimmered but faintly ; and the fresh breezes of heaven, even as the breathing of a slumberer, seemed to bring with them from the heavens a foreboding of eternal rest, infinite quietude.

Alexis seemed to experience in this moment the weariness of his whole life. His back, hands, legs, his whole body was an ache, his bones were full of pain.

He wanted to get up but had no strength left. He could but raise his hands to heaven and moan, as if calling to Him who could respond :

" My God, my God ! "

But no one answered. Silence reigned on earth as in heaven, it seemed his Heavenly Father had forsaken him, like his earthly one. He hid his face in his hands and leaning with his head against the stone bench he began to weep, first quietly, plaintively, as do neglected children, then louder and louder, more poignantly. He sobbed, beat his head against the stone, crying from the insult, indignation and terror. He cried because he had no father now, and in that cry was the cry from Golgotha—the eternal cry of the Son to the Father :—

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Suddenly he felt, just as that night when posted as sentry, some one approach in the darkness, stoop over and embrace him. It was Father John, the old sacristan of the Annunciation.

"What ails you, my lord? The Lord be with you. Who has grieved you?"

"Father! Father!" was all that Alexis could utter.

The old man understood it all. He sighed heavily, remained silent for a while, and then began to whisper in the spirit of hopeless resignation. The time-worn wisdom of the past was speaking through him.

"What can be done, Alexis? Submit yourself my child. The whip cannot outdo the axe, neither can you vie with the Tsar. God is in the heavens, the Tsar on earth. The Tsar's will must not be questioned. He is responsible to God alone. And to you he is not only the Tsar but our parent ordained by God."

"Not a father but a villain, a torturer, a murderer," cried Alexis, "curse him, curse him, the monster!"

"Lord Tsarevitch, your Highness! Invoke not God's wrath, use not such violent language. Great is a father's power. It is written: Honour thy father——"

Alexis suddenly stopped weeping, turned round abruptly and fixed on the old man a searching look.

"But something else too, is written: 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father.' Do you heed, old man? God it is who turned me against my father; I have been sent from God as a sword, an enemy, to pierce the heart of my parent, I am his heaven-sent judgment and execution. I stood up not for my own sake, but for the sake of the Church, the Empire, the whole Christian people. Zealous, I was zealous for the Lord. No! I will not humble myself, nor submit, not even if it should mean my death. The world cannot hold us both. Either he or I!"

The face distorted by convulsions, the trembling jaw, the fierce fire in the eyes, suddenly bore an unsuspected likeness to his father.

The old man gazed at him in terror, as at one possessed,

he made the sign of the cross, shook his head and with his time-worn lips mumbled the words of time-worn wisdom :—

“ Submit ! submit ! bow before your father’s will ”

And it seemed as if the ancient Kremlin walls, the palaces, churches, yea the very ground itself, together with the tombs of the patriarchs, echoed the words : “ *Submit ! Submit !* ”

When the Tsarevitch entered the house of the sacristan, the latter’s sister, who had been nurse to Alexis, Martha by name, glancing at his face thought him ill. Her anxiety only increased when he refused to share their supper, but went straight to his chamber. The old soul offered to give him lime-tea and to rub him with camphorated spirit. To pacify her he was obliged to take some brandy. With her own hands she put him to bed, on a couch softer, with its mountain of eiderdown and pillows, than any he had slept on for an age. The holy lamps burned peacefully before the images ; the air was saturated with the familiar scent of dried herbs, cypress and myrrh. So soothing was the monotonous babbling of his nurse, while relating the old tales about the Tsar John and the grey wolf, about the Cock with the golden comb, about the Bast shoe, the baboon and the wisp of straw, who wanted to cross the river together—the straw broke, the bast shoe sank, and the baboon swelled until it burst—that it seemed to Alexis in his half-sleep he was only a little boy and was lying in his tiny bed in his grandmother’s terem, and that all which had been was not ; that it was not Martha, but his granny, bending over him, covering him up, tucking him in, blessing him and whispering, “ Sleep darling, sleep, may God watch over thee.” And all is still and peaceful. Only the siren bird, denizen of Eden, is again singing its royal songs, and as he listens to its melodious strains, he seems to die, to sink into an eternal, dreamless slumber.

But just before the break of day he dreamt he was walking inside the Kremlin, across the Red Square, through the throng of people.

It was Palm Sunday and Christ’s entry into Jerusalem was being solemnised. Arrayed in regal robes, with the golden mantle and crown and barma of Monomachus, he leads by the reins the ass on which sits the patriarch, a

white-bearded old man, all in white and radiant in his whiteness. But looking more closely, Alexis perceives that the figure is no longer an old man, but a youth, in robes whiter than snow, with a face luminous as the sun—Christ Himself. The crowd does not see or cannot recognise Him. They all have terrible, lurid, corpse-like faces. All are silent, so silent that Alexis can hear his own heart beat. And the sky is also terrible, a livid grey, as if before an eclipse of the sun. At his feet there lolls a hunchback, in a three-cornered hat and a clay pipe in his mouth, who puffs straight into his face stinking Dutch tobacco. He babbles something, grins insolently, and points with his finger to a place whence comes a noise growing nearer and louder, like the rumbling of an approaching storm. And Alexis perceives that it comes from a procession. The Archdeacon of the 'Most Drunken Convocation of Tsar Peter' leads by the reins not an ass but some outlandish beast. Some one with a dark face rides on the beast. Alexis cannot distinguish it but it seems to resemble, only more terrible and repulsive than they, the scoundrel Theodosius and Peter the thief. Before them walks a shameless wench, naked; it might be Afrossinia or else the Petersburg Venus. All the bells are ringing, including the great bell of the John tower, called the Roarer, and the people shout as they had done some time before at the wedding of the Kniaz-Pope:—

"The Patriarch is married! The Patriarch is married!" Falling on their knees, they worshipped the beast, the wench and the low scoundrel.

"Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh!"

Abandoned by every one, Alexis remains alone with Christ, alone amidst the maddened throng. The wild procession hurries straight upon them, with shouts, shrieks, bringing with it smoke and stench, which tarnish the gold of the royal robes and even dims the very sunlight of Christ's face. Now the roysterers will be upon them, trampling, crushing, sweeping all before them, and great will be the abomination of desolation in the holy place.

And all disappears. He stands on the banks of a wide dreary river, it seems to be the highway from Poland to the Ukraine. It is late in a mid-autumn day. Wet snow and

black mud. The wind sweeps the last leaves from the trembling aspens. A beggar in tattered rags, blue with the cold, plaintively asks a kopeck for Christ's sake; some branded one too, thinks Alexis, as he notices his hands and feet covered with bloody wounds, probably a recruit who has deserted. He pities the youth and decides to give him, not merely a kopeck but a seven gulden piece. And he remembers in his dream, how he had entered in his diary along with other expenses: "November 22. For transport across the river three gulden, for quarters at a Jewish tavern five gulden, for a young lad starving seven gulden." Already he is holding out the coins to the beggar when suddenly a rough hand is laid on his shoulder and a gruff voice, probably that of the sentinel, speaks, "For bestowing alms, a fine of five roubles; the beggar after due castigation and torture to be sent off to the Rogerwick."

"Have pity!" pleads Alexis. "Foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." And looking closer at the deserter, the shivering lad, he perceived that his face is like the sun. The lad he dreamed was Christ Himself.

CHAPTER IV

“MY Son,—When I said good-bye to you, and asked about your resolution concerning a certain matter, on which you always gave me the reply that owing to your weakness you were not fit for the throne, but would prefer the monastery, I again told you to think it well over, and communicate to me your decision. I have waited for it these seven months, but to this day you have written me nothing. Now, therefore, as you have had ample time for consideration, on receipt of this letter, decide at once one way or the other. Should you choose the throne, do not tarry longer than a week, but come to me here, for you will yet be in time to take part in the campaign. But should you choose the monastery, write me when and where and what day, so that knowing what I may have to expect from you, my heart may be at rest. To this messenger entrust the final answer. Should it be the first, state the day of your departure from Petersburg ; should it be the second, the date of your entry into the cloister. And again we emphasize that this choice must be final, for I perceive that, as usual, you are spending your time to no purpose.”

The courier Saphnov brought this letter to Roshdestveno, where Alexis had returned on leaving Moscow. The Tsarevitch sent his father word that he was coming to him at once, but in reality decided nothing. To him the two alternatives, either to become a monk or to prepare himself for the duties of the throne, were but a double trap. To become a monk with the idea that the hood was not “nailed to the head” would mean to lose his soul before God by a false vow. And as to fitting himself for the duties of a future monarch in the sense his father demanded, it was

like asking him to enter his mother's womb and be born anew.

The letter neither frightened nor grieved Alexis. It found him in that senseless, listless torpor which had of late repeatedly laid hold of him. When in that condition he spoke and did everything as in a dream, never knowing a moment beforehand what he would say or do next. His heart was light and empty; whether from reckless cowardice or despairing insolence, it was difficult to say.

He went to Petersburg and put up at his house near the church dedicated to the Virgin of all the Sorrowing. He ordered his valet, Ivan Afanássieff, to pack what he needed for the journey like the last time he went abroad.

"Are you going to join your father?"

"I am going, the Lord knows best, either to him or somewhere else," Alexis said drowsily.

"Tsarevitch! How somewhere else?" The valet was frightened, or else feigned to be so.

"I should like to see Venice," began Alexis smiling, but in the next moment he added in a mournful voice, as if to himself, "I only do this to save myself. Yet, mind you keep silence. There is no one else besides you and Kikin who know anything about it."

"I will keep your secret," answered the old man in his usual gruff manner, though at this moment his eyes lit up with devotion. "Only we'll have a rough time of it when you have left. Bethink yourself what you intend doing——"

"I did not expect any message from my father," continued the Tsarevitch in the same drowsy tone, "and it never came to my mind; but now I see it is God who guides me. I dreamt last night that I was building churches, which means I have a journey to take——"

He yawned.

"Many in your station have sought refuge in flight," remarked Afanássieff, "but it has never happened in Russia within the memory of man."

From his house Alexis went straight to Ménshikov and informed him that he was going to join his father. The Prince spoke amiably, and before parting asked:—

"And where will you leave Afrossinia?"

"I'll take her as far as Riga and then send her back to Petersburg," answered Alexis at random, hardly realising what he said; afterwards he marvelled at his instinctive cunning.

"Why send her back?" said Ménshikov looking him straight in the face, "better take her with you."

Had Alexis been more attentive he would have been surprised. Ménshikov must have known that a son "desirous of fitting himself for the throne," could not appear in his father's camp, "to study military duties" with his mistress Afrossinia. What did the advice mean? When in the course of time Kikin heard about it, he suggested that Alexis should thank the prince by letter for his advice: "Your father might chance to find the letter at the prince's house, and suspicion at his having been an accomplice in your flight might be aroused."

Ménshikov told him to come to the Senate for the passport and money for the journey before leaving.

In the Senate all vied with one another in trying to render a service to the Tsarevitch, as if they wanted to show secretly a sympathy for him, which they did not dare to confess openly. Ménshikov provided him with 2,000 gold roubles; the Senate another 1,000, and at the same time arranged with the High Commissioner of Riga for a loan of 5,000 in gold, and 2,000 in small money. No one asked awkward questions; they all seemed to have agreed not to inquire why Alexis should need so much money. After the meeting was over, Prince Basil Dolgorúki took him aside: "Are you going to your father?"

"Where else, Prince?"

Dolgorúki looked carefully round, and then bringing his aged effeminate lips close to Alexis's ear, he whispered:—

"What else? Come, I'll tell thee"—and after a short silence he added, still in a whisper, "Had I considered only the Tsar's temper, and had there been no Tsaritsa, I would have been the first to desert at Stettin myself."

He pressed Alexis' hand, and tears stood in his sly, kindly eyes. "Could I serve thee in any way later on, I would gladly lay down my life for thee."

"Don't forget me," murmured Alexis quite mechanically, prompted by no thought or feeling.

He learnt in the evening that Jacob Dolgorúki, one of the Tsar's most devoted servants, had indirectly sent him word not to join his father : " a bad reception awaits him there."

The next morning, September 26, 1706, Alexis left Petersburg, in a mail coach, together with Afrossinia and her brother Ivan, a freed serf. He had not yet decided where he was going. On leaving Riga he still took Afrossinia with him, saying that he " had orders to proceed *incognito* to Vienna in order that he might arrange an alliance against the Turks."

In Libau he was met by Kikin, who was returning from Vienna.

" Have you found me a refuge ? " inquired the Tsarevitch.

" I have. Go straight to the Emperor, they will not betray you there. The Emperor himself told the Vice-Chancellor, Schönborn, that he will receive you like a son."

" Should envoys from my father meet me at Dantzic, what shall I do then ? "

" Escape at night," answered Kikin, " with one of the lads, leaving the luggage and other servants behind. If two envoys are sent, pretend to be ill, send back one in advance and run away from the other."

Observing his indecision, Kikin continued :—

" Remember, Tsarevitch, your father will not let you become a monk now, even if you should want to. Your friends, the Senators, have persuaded him to keep you always near him, and to make you accompany him everywhere, hoping thus to kill you by overtaking your strength, and your father said it was well thought of. Further, Prince Ménshikov reasoned with him, saying that you would have too much peace in the monastery and might live too long. Knowing these plans I am surprised they have not laid violent hands on you before now. They might, however, do this, get you on to Danish soil and then your father, under pretext of instruction, will put you on board a man of war, the captain of which will have orders to engage with a Swedish vessel standing by, and thus get you shot—this rumour comes from Copenhagen, and it will explain why you are now wanted. Nothing but flight can

save you. To voluntarily run your head into a noose would be the height of idiocy," continued Kikin, gazing intently at Alexis.

"What's the matter with you? You look so sleepy! Do you not feel well?"

"I am very tired," Alexis replied simply.

They had already taken leave of one another, when Kikin suddenly turned and ran back to Alexis, stopped him, and looking him straight in the face, said slowly, accentuating every word, and so great was the conviction behind them that the Tsarevitch, notwithstanding his indifference, shuddered:—

"Should your father send some one to try and persuade you to come back, and promise you absolute pardon, do not, on any account, listen to him. He will publicly behead you."

On quitting Libau, Alexis was as undecided where to go as on leaving Petersburg. Besides, he had hoped that there would be no need to come to a decision, since he expected to find envoys from his father at Dantzic.

In Dantzic the road branched out, one led to Copenhagen, one across Breslau to Vienna. No envoys were there. It was impossible to waver any longer. When the landlord at the hostel where Alexis had put up for the night, came in to ask where the horses had to be ordered for on the morrow, the Tsarevitch looked at him for a moment with an absent gaze, as if he were thinking about something else, and then said, hardly conscious of what it was,

"For Breslau."

The next moment this word, decisive of his fate, frightened him. Yet he thought there would be time to cancel the order on the morrow. In the morning the horses were ready, nothing remained but to enter the coach and be off. He postponed altering his decision till the next station, at the next station till Frankfort on the Oder, at Frankfort till Tübingen, at Tübingen till Grossen and so on. He went on and on, and already it was beyond his power to stop; he seemed to have broken loose and was now rolling down a slippery slope. The same sense of fear which before had kept him back now seemed to drive him on and on, and the fear increased with the travelling. He realized

that his fright was groundless, that his father could as yet know nothing about his flight, yet his blind, senseless fear he could not quell. Kikin had supplied him with false passes. Alexis gave out that he was now a Polish cavalier Kremenétzky, now the Lieutenant Colonel Kohánsky, now the Lieutenant Bálda, now a Russian merchant. Yet it seemed to him that all the innkeepers, coachmen, drivers, and post-masters knew that he was the Russian Tsarevitch, escaping, escaping from his father ! When sleeping at night in an inn he would start and jump out of bed alarmed at the least sound, noise of steps or creaking of the floor. Once, when a man of about the same height as his father, dressed in a grey coat such as Peter was wont to wear, entered the dusky dining room where Alexis was just having his supper, he nearly fainted. He saw spies everywhere. The liberality with which he spent his money made the careful Germans suspect, indeed, that they were dealing with a person of royal blood ; he was given the best horses on the extra posts, and the coachmen went at their fullest speed. Once in the twilight, noticing a coach driving behind them, he fancied it was in pursuit. He promised the driver ten gulden ; the latter went at a mad pace. On turning a corner the axle was caught on a stone, and the wheel flew off. They were obliged to stop and get out. The people driving behind caught them up. Alexis was frightened to such an extent, that he wanted to leave everything and alone with Afrossinia run on foot to hide in the wood. He was already dragging her, and it was only after considerable effort that she succeeded in holding him back.

After Breslau he hardly stopped anywhere. He travelled night and day without rest. He could neither eat nor sleep. Every morsel he tried to swallow seemed to choke him. No sooner did he doze off than the next moment he awoke, shuddering all over, bathed in cold sweat. He would rather have died or be at once caught, anything to escape this torture.

At last, after five sleepless nights, he fell into a deep slumber.

He woke in the coach ; it was early ; dawn had not yet broken. The sleep had refreshed him, he felt almost vigorous.

Afrossinia lay sleeping next to him. It was cold, he wrapped her up and kissed her sleeping face. They were passing through some small unknown city, with tall narrow houses, and streets which echoed noisily the rattle of the wheels. The shutters were closed, all seemed asleep. In the middle of the market place before the town hall, bubbled a fountain which flowed over the edges of a moss-grown stone shell, supported by stooping tritons. A holy lamp was burning in the niche before a Madonna.

On leaving the town they ascended the hill, thence the road led down into a wide, gently sloping plain. The coach was driven by six horses as swift as an arrow; the wheels softly rustled through the damp dust, the mists of night were still clouding the valleys; yet round the slopes the shroud had already began to grow less and less dense; the mist lifted slowly like a curtain, leaving behind it the dry grass and the sticky threads of cobweb beaded with sparkling dewdrops. A gleam of blue sky pierced the wafted vault. A flock of cranes passed across it, caught by the rays of the rising sun not yet visible from below; through the autumnal air rang their gathering cry. Hills appeared on the borders of the plain wrapped in a bluish haze; these were the mountains of Bohemia. Suddenly a dazzling ray flashed from behind them straight into Alexis' eyes, the sun was rising, and joy rose within his breast like the sun. It was God who had saved him, no one but God!

He laughed and wept for joy, as if it was for the first time he saw earth and sky and mountains. He watched the cranes, and it seemed to him that he too had wings, he too was flying. He breathed deep, again and again.

"Freedom, Freedom!"

CHAPTER V

THE Courier Saphnov, who had been sent in advance from Petersburg, informed the Tsar that the Tsarevitch was following immediately after him, yet two months passed by and he did not appear. The Tsar would not believe for some time that his son had run away: "How can he? he would not dare." But in the end he believed, and sent detectives along all roads and gave his Resident, Abraham Vesselóvsky, in Vienna, the following order: "It lies with you to make inquiries in Vienna, Rome, Naples, Milan, Sardinia, and Switzerland; whenever you get information of our son's abode, after having carefully made investigations, go thither and follow him up; at the same time inform us at once by special messenger; yourself remaining incognito."

Vesselóvsky, after a long search, at last came across his track. "We can trace him so far," he wrote to the Tsar from Vienna—"A certain Lieutenant Kochánsky stayed at the Black Eagle outside the town. The waiter tells me that he took him to be some distinguished person, as he spent his money very freely, was not unlike the Tsar of Moscow, possibly his son—the which Tsar he had seen in Vienna."

Peter was surprised; to him there was something strange and terrible in these words, "not unlike the Tsar." It had never occurred to him that Alexis could resemble him.

"After a stay of only twenty-four hours at the inn," continued Vesselóvsky, "he had his things taken away by a hired driver, and himself went on foot, after paying his bill, so that they do not know whether he has gone further or not. During his stay at the inn he bought his wife a man's suit of brown colour which she put on. All further

traces have disappeared. I have inquired in all the local inns, taverns, in private and public houses, but to no purpose. I have also engaged the help of detectives. I went myself along two mail roads which lead from here into Italy, the Tyrolese and the Carinthian Road, but nobody could supply me with the needed information."

The Tsar, divining that the Emperor had welcomed the fugitive and was hiding him in his dominions, sent him a letter from Amsterdam.

"MOST SERENE AND MOST MIGHTY EMPEROR,

"I am compelled to announce to your Imperial Majesty, in fraternal confidence with heartfelt sorrow, a calamity which has unexpectedly befallen us. It concerns our son Alexis. We have grounds for believing that your Majesty is not unaware that his past behaviour was always in opposition to our fatherly will, to our greatest discomfort, and that his conduct in wedded life with your relative left much to be desired. Some time ago we ordered him to join us here, hoping by this means to sever him from his useless life and companions. Taking none of his servants appointed by us, but in the company of several young people, he abandoned the road to ourselves, and disappeared no one knows where, and to this day we remain in ignorance of his whereabouts. And we, convinced that he has taken this blameworthy decision on the advice of certain people, have fatherly compassion upon him, and, afraid lest he should bring eternal destruction upon himself by this insubordinate act, and still more, to prevent his falling into the hands of our enemies, have given a command to our Resident Vesselóvsky at your court, to find him and bring him hither. Therefore we pray your Imperial Majesty, should he be in hiding in your dominions, secretly or openly, to give orders that he be sent to us with our Resident, and under the safe convoy of several officers, in order that we may fatherly chide him for his well-being. And we shall eternally feel obliged to you for this service and mark of friendship.

"We remain,

"Your Imperial Majesty's faithful brother,

"PETER."

At the same time it was intimated to the Emperor, that if he refused to deliver Alexis up of his own goodwill, the Tsar would seek his son out like a traitor, with armed force.

Each piece of new information that reached the Tsar was a fresh insult to him. Under the feigned sympathy of Europe lurked a secret enmity. "A certain major-general, on his return from Hanover," Vesselóvsky reported, "meeting me at court, spoke with me in the presence of the Ambassador of Mecklenburg; he sympathized with your Majesty's illness, which he presumed had been caused by grief, from the fact that your Crown Prince 'had become invisible,' using the French phrase, '*Il est éclipse*.' I asked him where he got this false information from. He answered me that this information was true and authentic, and he had it from the Hanoverian ministers. To which I replied that it was a calumny, owing its existence to the ill-will of the Hanoverian Court."

"The Emperor has good reason to support the Crown Prince," reported Vesselóvsky, as an opinion which is current at the foreign court, "because the aforesaid Crown Prince is in the right as against his father, and had cause for escaping from his father's dominions. Quite in the beginning, soon after the birth of the Tsarevitch Peter, your Majesty is supposed to have forced Alexis to abdicate the throne and to retire for the rest of his life to a hermitage. And when your Majesty was in Pomerania, seeing that the Crown Prince did not attempt to retire, you were supposed to have devised a new plan. This was to lure him to Holland and, under the pretext of instruction, to place him on one of your war vessels, give the Captain orders to engage in a fight with a Swedish vessel, which it was arranged should stand close by, and thus cause the Tsarevitch to be killed. This was the reason for his flight."

The Tsar was informed at the same time about the secret negotiations between the Emperor and King George the First of England. "The Emperor, prompted by ties of relationship, as well as by compassion for the sufferings of the Tsarevitch, and by the generosity of the imperial house towards all innocently persecuted persons, had granted shelter and protection to the Tsar's son. He asked the King of England whether he, too, felt disposed as an Elector

and relative of the house of Braunschweig, to protect the Tsarevitch. Attention was called to his miserable condition—'Miseranda conditio'—the father's evident and unrelenting tyranny—'clara et continua paterna tyrannidas'—also suspicion of poisoning and such like Russian 'galanterien.' "

The son became a judge, an accuser of the father.

And what more might happen? The Tsarevitch might become a weapon in the enemy's hand—might kindle an insurrection in the heart of Russia, entangle the whole of Europe in the war, and God alone knows how this would end. "To kill him were too little!" mused the maddened Tsar.

Yet another feeling overpowered him, a new feeling. The father had become afraid of the son.

Book VI

THE FUGITIVE TSAREVITCH

CHAPTER I

THE Tsarevitch and Afrossinia were boating one summer moonlight night, on the Gulf of Naples.

The very soul of Alexis was thrilled by the harmony around him ; harmony in the tremor of the moon's golden train which fell upon the water, a blazing path reaching from Posilippo across to the very brink of the horizon ; harmony in the murmur of the sea, and the light breeze which carried, together with the salt freshness of the sea air, sweet perfume from the shores of Sorrento, clad in lemon and orange groves ; harmony in the silvery azure outlines of Mount Vesuvius, wrapped in luminous mist, emitting a white smoke and, from time to time, flaring up like dying embers on an altar consecrated to the gods ; the gods who had died, who had risen again, and again had expired.

"Dearest one, see how lovely this is," whispered the Tsarevitch.

Afrossinia looked round her with the same placid indifference as if the scene were the Neva and the Peter and Paul fortress.

"Yes, it is warm ; though we are on the water we don't seem to feel the damp," she replied with a suppressed yawn.

He closed his eyes, and before him rose a vision of a room in Viasemski's house in Petersburg ; it was a spring evening, slanting rays of the setting sun flooded the room ; the servant girl Afrossinia, in a well tucked-up skirt and barefooted, bending low over her work, scrubbing the floor. She is a simple peasant girl, one of those whom village lads

call as "firm, plump and white as a well-washed turnip." Yet sometimes looking at her he would recall an ancient Dutch picture he had seen in his father's collection at Peterhof, "The Temptation of St. Anthony," a naked red-haired witch, goat-legged with split hoofs like a faun. In the face of Afrossinia with its too full lips, its slightly turned up nose, its large, lucid, languishing, almond-shaped eyes, there was something wild, innocently shameless, almost goat-like. To his mind would come the sayings of old writers about the fatal fascination of women: Sin began with woman, and through her we all die; to fall into her arms in love is to fall into the fire. He could not tell how it happened, but he loved her almost at first sight with a rude tender love, strong as death.

Here, on the Gulf of Naples she had remained the same Afrossinia as of old; here she was cracking with her teeth little nuts and spitting the shells in the silvered waves, just as she used to crack sunflower seeds in Petersburg, sitting in the kitchen among her fellow-servants on feast-days. Only now, dressed in the French fashion with beauty spots, and "robe ronde," she appeared yet more alluring and innocently shameless. No wonder she was stared at by the two soldiers and even by the elegant Count Esterhazy himself, who always escorted the Tsarevitch on all his expeditions from the St. Elmo fortress. Alexis loathed these leers of men, ever drawn to her like flies to honey.

"How now, Æsop, are you tired of this life, and longing to get home?" she asked in a drawling sing-song voice, turning to her neighbour, a tiny, ugly creature, a naval apprentice, Alexis Yurov—Æsop was only his nickname.

"Ah, Mistress Afrossinia, I find life here very hard. The instruction is so difficult that we might well spend all the rest of our life in trying to master it, and then without success. One is really baffled to know where to begin first, the language or the sciences. In Venice our lads, my messmates, are positively starving to death; their allowance is only three kopecks a day; and really they have been so neglected that they have neither drink nor meat, nor any clothes left, but walk about the streets in disgusting fashion, half in rags! We are left here like mere cattle. But my chief complaint is, that I can't stand the sea, it

makes me sick. I am not a seafaring man. It will be my death, unless some one takes pity on me. I would gladly walk back to Petersburg to escape the sea. I would rather beg my way than go by water—may it please his Majesty!”

“Ah, my friend, you will only drop from the frying pan into the fire. You won’t escape your dose of the lash at Petersburg for deserting your apprenticeship,” remarked the Tsarevitch.

“A bad job, Æsop. What will become of you, poor orphan? Where will you go?” asked Afrossinia.

“What choice is left for me? I must either go hang myself, or become a monk on Mount Athos!”

Alexis gazed at him with compassion; he involuntarily compared his own lot with that of the sailor deserter.

“Never mind, friend, we may yet, with God’s help, happily return to old Russia,” he said with a kindly smile.

They had now passed out of the golden stream of moonlight and were returning to the dark shore. Here at the foot of a hill stood an abandoned villa, built during the Renaissance period, on the ruins of an ancient Venus temple.

Along both sides of the half-ruined steps, which led down to the sea, gigantic cypresses were ranged like torch-bearers at a funeral. Their entwined tips, continually caught by the wind from the sea, remained bent like heads drooping in sorrow. White statues of gods gleamed spectre-like in the dark shade. And the fountain jet seemed also a pale spectre. In the laurel thickets were shining glow-worms, like funeral tapers. The heavy scent of the magnolias recalled the smell of balsam used for anointing dead bodies. A peacock in the villa, roused by the voices and splashing of oars, strutted out on the steps, opening his tail, and shimmered in the moonlight with dim iridescence, a fan set with gems. Plaintive cries of the peahens sounded like piercing wails of mourners. The waters of the fountain, trickling from an overhanging rock along the thin, hair-like grass, fell into the sea, drop after drop like silent tears, as though a nymph was weeping in the cave, bewailing her sisters. All this sad villa brought to mind some dark Elysium, the subterranean grove of shadows, the burial ground of dead gods; of gods who had died, who had risen again, and again had died.

"Could you believe it, gracious mistress, it is well nigh three years since I had a vapour bath!" continued Æsop.

"Ah! could I but have a few fresh birch twigs and then some cherry honey after the bath," sighed Afrossinia.

"Tears almost rise to my eyes when drinking the sour stuff of this place, and remember our vodka," moaned Æsop.

"And some pressed caviar!" echoed Afrossinia.

"And salt sturgeon!"

"And smelt from the White Lake!"

Thus they went on, aggravating their regrets. The Tsarevitch listened to them, while looking at the villa and involuntarily smiled. The contrast seemed so strange between these prosaic dreams and the fantastic reality.

Another boat was gliding along the fairy path of the sea, leaving a black trace in the quivering gold. The sound of a mandoline and a song sung by a young girl's voice was wafted across the water.

Quant' è bella giovinezza,
Che si fugge tuttavia.
Chi vuol esser lieto, sia;
Di doman non c' è certezza!

This love song had been composed by Lorenzo di Medici Il Magnifico, for the triumphant procession of Bacchus and Ariadne at Florentine festivities. It sounded the short-lived joy of the Renaissance, and infinite sorrow for its loss. The Tsarevitch listened, unable to make out its meaning, yet the music filled his soul with sweet melancholy.

Fair fleeting youth must snatch at happiness.
He knows not if to-morrow curse or bless.

"And now, Mistress, a Russian song!" begged Æsop.

He meant to go down on his knees, but floundered and just escaped tumbling into the water. He was not over steady on his feet, owing to the continual sipping of the sour wine from a bottle, which he modestly tried to conceal under the lappel of his coat. One of the oarsmen, a half-naked, fine, dark fellow seemed to understand his request, for he smiled at Afrossinia, beckoned Æsop and handed him

a guitar. The latter started jingling on it as on some three-stringed balalaïka.

Afrossinia smiled, glanced at the Tsarevitch and suddenly began her song in a loud, slightly shrieking voice, just as she used to sing in the choir on dusky spring evenings near the birch grove which overshadowed the banks of the river. The shores of Naples, antique Parthenope, resounded with the unwonted alien strains :—

“Oh my pretty balcony, newly
Built with maple tree, latticed fair !”

Infinite yearning for the past—the distant—breathed in the Italian song :—

Chi vuol esser lieto, sia ;
Di doman non c'e certezza.

Infinite desire for the future breathed in the Russian :—

Fly my falcon fair, far away from here,
To that country dear, which was once mine own !

Both songs, the known and the unknown, mingled in one. The Tsarevitch could hardly restrain his tears ; never yet had he loved Russia so dearly as now. But he loved it with a new, all-embracing love as part of Europe, he loved the foreign country as his own. And this love for his own country mingled harmoniously with his love for the foreign one, like the two songs over the water.

CHAPTER II

THE Emperor, when he took the Tsarevitch under his protection, the more securely to hide him from his father, lodged him, under the name of a Hungarian Count, in the solitary, inaccessible castle of Ehrenberg—a real eagle's nest, clinging to the peak of a rock in the upper Tyrolean mountains, on the road from Fussen to Innsbruck. The Tsarevitch felt himself a prisoner, but safe.

"Immediately on receiving this," ran the Emperor's instructions to the commander of the fortress, "have two rooms ready for the chief person, with strong doors and iron-barred windows. Soldiers and their wives must not be allowed to leave the fortress under severe penalty, even death. If the distinguished prisoner expresses a desire to talk to you, you may do as he wishes, both in this case and in several others; as for instance if he asks for a book or something else for diversion, or even if he should invite you to dine or to take part in some game. Moreover, you may grant him permission to walk about in the rooms or the courtyard for fresh air, but always take precautions lest he escape."

Alexis had spent five months at Ehrenburg; from December until April.

Notwithstanding all precautions, the Tsar's spies, Roumiantzev, captain of the guards, together with three other officers, who had secret orders to obtain possession of a certain person at all costs, and bring him to Mecklenburg, learnt of the Tsarevitch's sojourn in Ehrenberg. They arrived in Upper Tyrol and secretly installed themselves in the tiny village of Reite at the very foot of the Ehrenberg Rock.

The Resident Vesselóvsky declared "that his Majesty

the Tsar will be exceedingly hurt by the answer, given in the Emperor's name, that a certain person was not to be found in the Emperor's domains, while a messenger had seen his retinue in Ehrenberg, where he is kept at the Emperor's cost. Not only Captain Roumiantzev, but all Europe, knows that the Tsarevitch is within the Emperor's domains. Suppose the Archduke should run away from his father and find refuge in Russia, and this refuge be accorded to him secretly, how would this affect the Emperor? Would it not be a grief to him?"

"Your Majesty," wrote Peter to the Emperor, "may infer what we, as a father, must feel in regard to our first-born son, who, showing us such disobedience, left us without our sanction, and is now kept under a stranger's protection or arrest, which we know not. On this point we desire an explanation from your Majesty."

The Tsarevitch was informed that the Emperor left it to him to decide whether he would return to Russia or continue under his protection. In the latter case it was obvious that he must be transferred to some remoter place, for instance Naples. At the same time it was hinted to Alexis that the Emperor wished him to leave behind at Ehrenberg, or quite dispense with, the company of certain persons his father had raised objections to in his letter, and thus rob the Tsar of any just ground of complaint that the Emperor was extending his protection to worthless creatures. This was said with a view to Afrossinia. It really seemed unbecoming for the Tsarevitch to implore the Emperor's protection in the name of his dead wife, who was sister to the Empress, and at the same time to bring with him a woman with whom it was rumoured he had been allied even during his wife's lifetime.

Alexis declared his readiness to go wherever the Emperor sent him, and live in whatever way the Emperor desired, provided he was not delivered up to his father.

On the 15th of April, at three o'clock in the morning, Alexis, in spite of the spies, left Ehrenberg as an imperial officer. He had only one servant with him, this was Afrossinia in the disguise of a page.

"Our Neapolitan pilgrims have safely arrived," reported Count Schönborn, "I will send my secretary at the very

first opportunity with detailed description of this journey—very entertaining, as might be expected. Our little page, among other things, was discovered to be a woman, neither married and still less a maid. She is declared to be a mistress and indispensably necessary.”

“I take no end of measures to keep our company from drinking so often and so much, but all effort is vain,” reported Schönborn’s secretary, who was accompanying the Tsarevitch.

They passed through Innsbruck, Mantua, Florence, and Rome. On May 6, 1717, at midnight, they reached Naples and put up at the Three Kings Hotel. On the eve of the next day the Tsarevitch was taken in a hired carriage outside the town as far as the sea, then brought by a secret way into the castle. There he remained for two days, during which time the chambers especially assigned to him in the St. Elmo Fortress were being prepared. The fortress stood on a high hill overlooking Naples.

Though here also he lived as a kind of prisoner, yet he did not feel dull or oppressed by the fact; the higher the walls, the deeper the ditch round the fortress, the more trustworthy protection they were to him from his father.

The windows of his apartments, with a covered balcony, overlooked the sea. Here he spent whole days. He fed, just as he used to in Russia, the pigeons which, flocking from all sides, were soon tamed by him; he read historical and philosophical books, chanted psalms and litanies, gazed at Naples, Vesuvius, Ischia, Procida and Capri, which glowed like sapphires in the distance; but by more than anything was he attracted by the sea; he could not tear himself away from looking at it. It seemed to him that this was the first time he had ever seen the sea. The northern dull waters of Petersburg, the sea of commerce and war, so beloved by his father, was quite unlike this southern, blue, boundless expanse.

Afrossinia was with him. When he forgot his father he was almost happy.

He was guarded with great strictness. He had obtained however, after great difficulty, a pass for Æsop into St. Elmo. Æsop had already made himself indispensable. He amused Afrossinia, who was often dull; played cards and draughts

with her, diverted her by jokes, tales and fables, thus acting the part of the real *Æsop*.

What *Æsop* enjoyed most of all was relating to the pair his own travels in Italy. Alexis listened to him with interest, while reviving his own impressions. Much as *Æsop* longed to return to Russia, much as he missed the Russian bath and vodka, it was evident that he also, like the *Tsarevitch*, was beginning to love the foreign country as if it were his own, to love Russia as a part of Europe, with a new all-embracing love.

"The way is extremely dreary, and difficult," he used to narrate, describing the pass across the Alps. "The path is very narrow; on one side mountains tower high as the clouds, on the other yawn exceedingly deep precipices, which boisterous torrents fill with incessant noise like watermills. And to look down makes men shiver. Those hills are always covered with much snow because the sunbeams never penetrate among them.

"But coming down we found, although it was winter in the heights, fair summer reigning in the valleys. Along both sides of the road a mass of vine and fruit trees, lemons, oranges, and among the trees creepers formed curious figures. The whole of Italy seemed one great garden, an image of God's Paradise! On March 7th we noticed fruit; lemons and oranges, some ripe, some not quite; others green, or yet in the germ, and even blossoms, the same tree bearing all.

"There, hard by the hills in a pleasant place stood a house called a villa, built in a very superb style. This house is surrounded by a most beautiful garden and orchards; people spend their time in walking there. And in those gardens all the trees are planted regularly, even the foliage is clipped in keeping with the rest. Flowers and grass are sown in pots and placed about according to design. A splendid perspective is maintained. And many a famous fountain is fitted up in these gardens from which springs extremely clean water in various cunning ways; and along the paths, instead of curb-stones, marble men and women are placed, Jove, Bacchus, Venus, and other heathen gods, so well made that they almost seem alive. And these statues belonging to past ages had been

dug from the earth." About Venice he recited such wonders that for a long time Afrossinia did not believe him, and confused Venice with a legendary town spoken of in Russian tales.

"You are a great inventor, Æsop," she would say, yet listened to him with avidity.

"Venice stands in the water; sea-water covers all the streets and lanes, and boats are used to go about in. There are no horses or other beasts; neither, Madam, are there any carriages, landaus, carts; as for sledges they have never even heard of them. In summer the air is oppressive, and sometimes filled with an extremely bad smell coming from stagnant water, such as we get in Petersburg from the Fontana canal when it is choked up. And all over the town there are lots of carrier boats, called gondolas, which are constructed in a peculiar manner: long and narrow like those made of one tree trunk, both bow and stern are pointed; an iron comb crowns the bow, and in the middle stands a hut with glass windows and damask curtains; all the gondolas are black, covered with black cloth, looking very much like coffins; as for the oarsmen, one of them stands at the bow while the other, at the stern, rows and steers with the same oar. They have no rudders yet manage perfectly without them.

"There are such wonderful operas and comedies played in Venice! Beyond one's power to describe accurately. Nowhere in the whole world can one meet with such extraordinary comedies and operas. And the halls in which these operas are performed are large and round, the Italians call them "theatrum," and in these halls numerous closets are fitted up five stories high with ingenious gilt work. And in these operas the ancient legends of heroes, Greek and Roman gods are represented. Everyone has in his theatre that legend performed which he prefers. These operas are frequented by people wearing masks so that one should not recognize another. Also during the whole of Carnival time they wear masks and curious dresses; everybody walks just where it pleases them; they have music on their gondolas, dance, eat sweetmeats and drink fine lemonades and chocolates. Thus they are constantly amusing themselves and are not in the least inclined to do

without merriment. These revels, though, often lead to sin; for when they thus come together all masked, many of the women and maidens without the slightest shame take foreigners by the arm and amuse themselves without stint.

"The women folk of Venice are extremely good-looking, tall, slender, fine and well mannered; they are *rusées* and dress extremely well. They despise manual labour. They spend their time in indolence; they love pleasure and have a weakness for carnality, simply because they want money. It is their only trade. Many of the wenches live in separate houses and in no way consider their profession a thing to blush at. Others who have no houses of their own live in separate streets in low small chambers on the ground floor. Every room has a door leading straight into the street, and when they see a man coming towards them each one does her best to capture him. The day that brings most visitors is reckoned the happiest. As a consequence they suffer from the French malady, and they who visit them are soon generously gratified by a share of it. The clergy sermonise, but do not otherwise interfere. They are extremely skilful," said Æsop meditatively, "in curing the French complaint in Venice."

The same interest which he had shown in his tales about the Venetian revels appeared in his descriptions of various Church miracles and holy relics.

"I was found worthy to see a cross in which, under glass, was a bit of the nose of St. John the Baptist; and the relics of St. Nicolas, which produce the holy oil that never dries up. I've also seen the boiling blood of St. Januarius, and a bone of St. Laurence himself. This bone is shut up in a crystal box, and when one kisses the box one can feel the surprising heat of the bone—through the crystal."

With equal wonder he would describe the miracles of science.

"At Padua, in the medical academy there are embalmed children, born before their time, or else cut out of their dead mothers; they float in glass bottles filled with spirit, and thus can be preserved a thousand year, and more."

Æsop was a lover of everything classical. All the productions of the middle ages seemed barbarous to him. He went into ecstasies over imitations of ancient sculpture,

their symmetry, their perfection of line, proportion—all his eye had already got used to in young Petersburg. He did not like Florence.

“There are few really splendid, well proportioned houses. All Florentine houses are of an older date. One does occasionally come across palaces three or four stories high, but their style is plain, not in the least architectural.”

He was most of all struck with Rome. He spoke about it with that almost superstitious feeling of reverence which the Eternal City always rouses in Barbarians.

“Rome is really a *great* city. Even to this day the boundaries of ancient Rome can be traced and thus the vast dimensions of the old city revealed. Districts, once in the very centre of Rome, are now fields and ploughland, sown with wheat, planted with vineyards, or else used as pasturage for buffalos, oxen and sundry other cattle.

“Many an ancient edifice, ruined with age, lies scattered on these fields, even in its ruins revealing a master’s hand acquainted with symmetry, such as is no longer met with. And from the mountains leading up to Rome are seen ancient stone pillars connected by arches; they bear a stone trough which held the extremely pure spring water coming from the hills. And those pillars are called aqueducts, and the fields the ‘Campagna di Roma.’”

The Tsarevitch had had only a glimpse at Rome, but now, as he sat listening to Æsop, it seemed some awful shadow of indescribable grandeur was sweeping past him.

“In these fields,” went on Æsop, “among the ruins of Roman buildings there is an entrance to some caves. In these caves Christians sought refuge in times of persecutions and were tortured, and even unto this day many a martyr’s bones remain there. These caves, called catacombs, are so large that, it is said, they have underground passages leading to the sea, besides many others not yet explored. And close to these catacombs, in a tiny, solitary church stands an extremely large coffin—a sarcophagus—of Bacchus, hewn out of porphyry stone. This sarcophagus tomb is empty. Long, long ago, runs the legend, it contained an incorruptible body of indescribable beauty, which, by a trick of the devil, bore the likeness of the pagan god Bacchus. The holy men threw this foul thing away, hal-

lowed the spot and built a church upon it. . . . Then I came to another place called the Colosseum, where the ancient Roman Emperors, who persecuted the Christians, offered holy martyrs as a prey to wild beasts. The place is round, very huge, would measure about forty yards in height ; the walls are made of stone. On them the ancient torturers would walk watching the animals tear the holy martyrs to pieces. Under these walls on the ground are stone caves where the animals lived. St. Ignatius was devoured in this Colosseum, and every bit of its soil is stained with the blood of martyrs."

The Tsarevitch remembered how, in his childhood, he was repeatedly told that, in the whole world, Russia alone was a holy land and all the other peoples were pagans. He also remembered how he himself had once said to Fräulein Arnheim, standing on the pigeon-house in Roshdestveno : "We alone have Christ." "Is this true ?" he now asked himself. What if they also have Christ, and not only Russia ? What if all Europe were holy land ? The soil in that place is all stained with martyr's blood. Can such a place be pagan ?"

He was convinced that the third Rome, as Moscow was occasionally termed, was as far off the first, real Rome, as Petersburg was from the real Europe.

"At a time when Moscow was not even thought of," declared Æsop, "there were many empires in the west older and greater than Moscow."

The words with which he concluded a description of the Venetian Carnival remained in the Tsarevitch's memory.

"Thus they all amuse themselves and think no evil of one another, neither do they fear anybody. Everyone does as best pleases him. And such freedom is always maintained in Venice, and the Venetians live in peace, without fear of insult, and without heavy taxation."

The implication was clear ; their life is very different from ours in Russia, where no one dares even so much as hint at freedom.

"In all European nations one course of action is especially commendable," remarked Æsop one day, "and that is with regard to education. The children are not treated brutally either by parents or teachers ; but with the help of

kindly or else sharp rebuke alone, which have been found more effective than blows, they are brought up in the spirit of freedom and courage. And being aware of this, Moscow people would not send their children to be educated in foreign parts, afraid lest, once acquainted with the faith and customs and beneficent freedom of other countries, they should change their religion and neither desire nor think of returning home. They do send them nowadays, but what's the good of it? For as the bird can't live without air, knowledge can't prosper without freedom; and with us they try to teach new things in the old way. The stick, though dumb, is still expected to impart knowledge."

Thus both of them, the fugitive naval apprentice and the fugitive Tsarevitch, confusedly felt, that the Europeanism which Peter was introducing into Russia—calculation, navigation, fortifications—was not the whole of Europe, nor even European in its essential characteristic; the real Europe possessed a higher truth, not yet revealed to the Tsar. And without this truth, in spite of all knowledge, the old Moscow barbarism would only be supplanted by a new Petersburg vulgarity. To this blessed mysterious liberty it was that the Tsarevitch addressed himself in summoning Europe to judge between him and his father.

One day Æsop told the "history of the Russian sailor Basil Koriotsky and the beautiful Florentine Princess Irakli."

To the listeners, and perhaps to the narrator himself, the meaning of the story was obscure and yet mysteriously suggestive. The marriage of a Russian sailor with a Princess of Florence—of the land where the Renaissance had its springtime, the most beautiful flower of European liberty—was a prophetic vision of the unknown, yet approaching, union of Russia with Europe.

The Tsarevitch in listening to the story thought of a picture his father had brought from Holland: the Tsar in a sailor suit embracing a buxom Dutch wench. Alexis could not help smiling at the thought that this red-faced girl was as remote from the Florentine Princess, "who was bright as the unveiled sun," as new Russia was from what she ought to be.

"I dare say your sailor did not return to Russia," Alexis asked.

"Why should he?" grunted Æsop, with a sudden indifference towards the Russia he had only so lately sighed for. "In Petersburg he would probably have had the cat-o'-nine-tails, and then been sent off to Rogerwick; while the Florentine Princess would have been stuck into the weaving yard for a prostitute."

But Afrossinia suddenly interposed:—

"Well, now you see, Æsop, what your sailor gained by his education. Had he run away from his teacher, as you have, he would never have gained the Princess. What is the good of praising the freedom of this country? The mountain-ash berries are not meant for a crow's beak. To grant you freedom is to make you good for nothing. How else can you be taught but with a stick, seeing you won't learn of your own free will? Thanks be to our father the Tsar. You only get your deserts."

*Afrossinia
is much
like Peter*

CHAPTER III

Quiet River Don,
Loved father mine,
Wash thou me !
Earth so cool and moist,
Loved mother mine,
Cover me !”

A FROSSINIA was singing, sitting at her window in the fortress of St. Elmo. She was busily unpicking the red damask lining of her sand-coloured suit of disguise ; nothing on earth, she had declared, would ever induce her to deck herself out in this ridiculous manner again.

She wore a dirty silk gown with all the buttons torn off ; on her naked feet slippers, embroidered in silver and worn down at the heels. The pewter workbox before her contained various bits of stuff and ribbon, a small fan, gloves, love letters written by the Tsarevitch, envelopes with scented powder, an amulet given her by a saintly old man, “ *poudre Maréchal* ” from the celebrated hairdresser Frisson, of Rue Saint Honoré, a rosary from Mount Athos, Parisian beauty-patches, and jars of pomade ; she spent hours in painting her face, which was absolutely unnecessary, as her complexion was faultless. The Tsarevitch sat at the same table writing letters, which were destined to be anonymously circulated in Petersburg, and also handed to archdeacons and senators.

“ HONOURED GENTLEMEN OF THE SENATE,—

“ Your lordships, as well as the whole Russian nation, I presume, must be surprised at my unexplained absence and the mystery which surrounds me. My conduct was prompted by the way in which my behaviour was persistently misunderstood, and especially by what has hap-

pened since the beginning of last year, when I was almost forced to take the monk's habit, without any misdeed on my part, a fact which is well known to everybody. But the all merciful Lord, moved by the prayers of the Holy Virgin, comforter of all the afflicted, and all the saints protected me and gave me shelter away from my beloved country, which, but for this sad occasion, I would never have left. At present I am in good health, under the protection of a powerful Emperor, until the time when the Lord, who saved me, will command me to return to Russia, in which case I ask you to stand by me.

"If any report is circulated about me with the view of uprooting my memory from the minds of the people, if, for instance, it is said, that I am no longer among the living, or that some other mischief has befallen me, believe it not, and also try to prevent the nation believing it. Alive by God's protection, I remain, wishing you and the whole nation well.

"Faithfully yours, to my grave,
"ALEXIS."

He glanced through the open door of the balcony towards the sea, which lay quivering below the fresh north breeze. A haze seemed to rise from the boiling deep, shrouding the sparkling surge and the white sails, like the breasts of proud swans. The Tsarevitch mused that this was the same blue sea which took Oleg and his "droushina" to Constantinople and which is sung about in the Russian lore.

He took out a couple of folded leaflets filled with his own laboured handwriting in German. There was a note on the margin, "Excuse my bad writing, but I have done my best." This was a long letter addressed to the Emperor, an accusation against his father. He had begun it some time ago, but was always altering it, crossing out, re-writing, and somehow or other he could not bring himself to finish it. What seemed right in thought no longer appeared so when expressed in words. There was some insurmountable barrier between thought and expression, and no words could be found to convey adequately the essential point.

He revised some stray passages :

"The Emperor must save me. I am innocent before my

father. I have always loved, honoured and obeyed him according to God's law. I know I am only a weakling, but the fault lies with Ménshikov's training. He never taught me anything; always tried to separate me from my father, and throughout treated me no better than some serf or a dog. They did their best to make a drunkard of me. My spirit was broken by continuous drunkenness and persecution. Albeit, my father on occasion used to be kind to me. He entrusted me with administration; all for a time went well and he was pleased with me. But ever since my wife began bearing children—the new Tsaritsa had also borne a son—they began to treat the Crown Princess badly, forced her to perform the duties of a servant, and she died of grief. Then Ménshikov and the Tsaritsa systematically irritated and set my father against me. They are both filled with malice, knowing neither God nor conscience. If left to himself, the Tsar is kind and just; but he is surrounded by intriguers, while at the same time he is incredibly passionate; he believes that like God, he has the right of life and death. He has shed much innocent blood, and often he has tortured and put victims to death with his own hands. If the Emperor were to deliver me to my father, it would be my certain death. Even should my father spare me, my stepmother and Ménshikov would not rest until they succeed in killing me either by drink or poison. The abdication of the throne was extorted from me; I have no desire to become a monk; I have sufficient brains to govern. God is a witness that I never even so much as contemplated rousing the people to revolt, though it would have been an easy task for me to do so. The people are affectionate towards me, and dislike my father for his unworthy wife, his cruel and debauched favourites, the desecration of churches and the abolition of old customs, and also because he spares neither money nor blood, because he is the tyrant and enemy of his people."

"Enemy of his people?" repeated the Tsarevitch. He thought over his words, then crossed them out; they no longer seemed true. He was well aware of his father's love for the nation, though this love was often more pitiless than hatred: a loving father does not spare the

rod. It were almost better if he loved less. He loved him, his son, also. But for this love he would not chastise or torture him. And again, as always, when re-reading this letter he vaguely felt that it was just and yet not completely just. Wholly guiltless? Wholly guilty? there was an imperceptible shade of discrimination still to observe in order to keep the balance true; he seemed to always, though unconsciously, fail to seize this fine line of justice in his accusations. Each of them seemed to grasp a distinct truth; and the two truths were doomed to remain eternally contradictory, eternally irreconcilable. It was impossible for both him and his father to remain supreme. Yet it mattered little which of the pair gained ascendancy, the conqueror would always be in the right, the conquered in the wrong.

And he himself could only vaguely formulate all this to himself, much less could he explain it to others; and even then, who could understand or would believe him? Who except God could judge between father and son?

Laying the letter on one side with a heavy heart, with a secret longing to destroy it, he sat listening to Afrossinia's song. She had finished her work, and was now standing before a mirror, trying to adjust her new French face-patches. This continuous, subdued singing all through the monotonous days of her prison life, seemed as involuntary as the singing of a caged bird. She sang as she breathed, unconsciously. Yet the Tsarevitch could not help feeling a quaint contrast between this playing with French patches and the melancholy Russian song:—

Earth so cool and moist,
Loved mother mine,
Cover me!
Forest nightingale,
Loved brother mine,
Sing of me!
Cuckoo, woodland bird,
Loved sister mine,
Call for me!
Birch, as white and slender
As a fair young maiden,
Rustle thou for me!

Along the echoing passages of the fortress steps were heard, the call of sentinels, the noise of locks and bolts. The officer on duty knocked at the door, and announced Weingart, the secretary of the Imperial Viceroy in Naples.

An asthmatical, stout man entered the room with many bows ; his face was the colour of raw beef, the under lip drooped, his small eyes like those of a pig seemed lost in his fat face. As with many rascals, he had an artless good-natured look about him. Æsop's verdict on him was, "a wily beast !"

Weingart presented the Tsarevitch with a case of Moselle ; observing the incognito, he addressed him as "His Excellency the Count." For Afrossinia, whose hand he kissed with much gallantry, he had brought a basket of fruit and flowers. At the same time he handed over letters which had arrived from Russia and communicated a verbal message from Vienna :—

"In Vienna they were pleased to learn that His Excellency the Count was enjoying good health. Much patience is required, and now more than ever. The latest piece of news, which might be of interest, is a rumour apparently fast gaining ground, that the Tsarevitch has disappeared. Some suppose he escaped from his father's cruelty, others believe he has been put to death by the Tsar's instigation, others again fear he has fallen among murderers and lost his life on the journey. But no one knows precisely where he is. Here is a report of the Imperial Resident Pleyer to that effect, if your Excellency is at all curious as to what are the current views in Petersburg on the subject. The Emperor's exact message is as follows : 'We advise our beloved Tsarevitch, for his own good, to observe strictest incognito, for, on his return to Petersburg, the Tsar will inaugurate a thorough investigation.'"

Then stooping down to Alexis he whispered in his ear :—

"Fear not, your Highness ! My information comes from most reliable quarters. The Emperor will not forsake you ; and should there be need for it after your father's death, he is prepared to help you to the throne with armed force."

"No ! no ! what are you talking about ?" The Tsarevitch

stopped him, that feeling again taking possession of him which a few moments since had prompted him to lay the Emperor's letter aside, "I do hope for God's sake it will never come to that! war will never be caused by me. It is not this I asked you for, only your protection. I did not even desire anything else. However, I am much obliged to you. May God reward the Emperor for the kindness he has shown to me!"

He ordered one of the Moselle bottles to be opened, in order to drink the Emperor's health. He went out of the room to fetch some important letters, and on his return he found Weingart engaged in politely explaining to Afrossinia, more by signs it is true than by words, that she did wrong in giving up her man's clothes which had so admirably suited her.

"L'Amour même ne saurait se présenter avec plus de grâces," he concluded in French, fixing on her with his little pig's eyes that look which was so particularly odious to the Tsarevitch.

When Weingart was announced, Afrossinia had hastened to alter her outward appearance. Thus he found her wearing a beautiful new damask surcoat, which concealed her dirty dressing gown; a cap of loveliest Brabant lace covered her dishevelled hair; she had powdered herself, and had even found time to fix a beauty spot above her left eyebrow, as she had noticed a Parisian courtesan wear hers in Rome driving in the Corso. The expression of dullness had disappeared from her face; she had brightened up; though she understood not a word of either French or German, she knew full well that Weingart was talking about her recent disguise. She smiled roguishly, blushed and hid her face in her sleeve after the manner of a Russian peasant girl.

"With this German, a pig's carcass, the Lord forgive me! she has found a nice person to flirt with," the Tsarevitch thought, annoyed. "Ah, bah! it's all the same to her; all she requires is some novelty, anything will do so long as it is new. Eve's daughters are all alike. A woman, a devil, they keep the balance even."

After Weingart had gone, Alexis began reading the letters; the most important was Pleyer's report.

"The regiments of the Guard, which consist for the most part of nobles, together with the rest of the army, have organized a plot in Mecklenburg: they propose killing the Tsar, bringing the present Tsaritsa and her three children back here where they will be shut up in the same convent which for so long has cloistered the former Tsaritsa, who will be liberated, and the government entrusted to her son, the legitimate heir."

The Tsarevitch tossed off two glasses of Moselle and began to pace up and down the room, murmuring something to himself, and gesticulating with his arms. Afrossinia's eyes were following him silently and intently, while apparently quite indifferent. After Weingart had left, her face had lapsed into its habitual expression of dulness.

At last, pausing in front of her, he exclaimed:—

"Well, dearest, soon all the dainties you desire shall be at your disposal. This is good news! God will soon grant us a safe and joyous return!"

He carefully explained to her Pleyer's report. The last words he read out in German, they evidently delighted him beyond measure, "Alles zum Aufstand allhier sehr geneiget ist—All here are greatly inclined to revolt. There is a general complaint about nobles and peasants being treated alike, made without distinction to serve in the army and navy. As to the villages, they are positively ruined by the building of ships and towns."

Afrossinia listened without a word of comment, her face manifesting the same dull indifference, and only when he had finished, she asked in her characteristic, languid, lazy tone:—

"Alexis, suppose the Tsar is killed and you are sent for, will you side with the revolutionists?"

She glanced at him sideways, with a look which, had he not been so entirely preoccupied with his own thoughts, would have amazed him, or even made him aware of a secret sting in this question; but he noticed nothing.

"I don't quite know yet," he answered, after a short silence. "Should the summons come, I might side with them. But why build on probabilities? God's will be done——" He stopped short, as if now only realizing what he was saying. "I only tell you this, Afrossinia, to

show you how God works. My father plans one course, God follows His own ! ”

Exhausted with joy he sank into a chair, and, oblivious of Afrossinia's presence, began talking to himself.

“ There is printed information that the Swedish fleet has started for the Lithuanian shores to land troops. If this be true, great mischief will ensue. In Petersburg our Senators and Prince Ménshikov will not work harmoniously together ; and meanwhile our main forces are far away ; there are quarrels and rivalries, the Swedes will be able to do great mischief. Petersburg lies within their reach ; mind we don't lose it as we lost Azov. Either the Swedes will take it from us, or else of itself it will fall into ruins. “ Petersburg will be destroyed, destroyed ! ” he repeated with gusto his aunt's habitual prophecy.

“ And this apparent lull is also a bad omen. My uncle, Abraham Lopoukhin, writes that people of all ranks and classes inquire after me, sympathize with me, and are ready to stand by me ; that there is already beginning a ferment round Moscow, also lower down along the Volga, the people will not remain unaffected. Is this to be wondered at ? Have they not remained patient for so long ! Ah, but it won't pass by this time ! I am sure their longsuffering will give out, and they will act in some way or other. Add to this the conspiracy in Mecklenburg, the Swedes, the Emperor, myself. Calamity threatens on all sides ! the whole edifice is crumbling, tottering. It will, indeed, be a severance. Ah ! father ! you won't have the best of it ! ”

For the first time in his life he felt himself to be a power, dangerous to his father. Joy was again well-nigh stifling him, as on that memorable night, during Peter's illness, when, behind the frosted window in the moonlight, a wild turbulent snowstorm, a luminous blue chaos, was tossing itself about as in some mad delirium. Joy had intoxicated him even more than the wine of which he continued to drink glass after glass, his eyes fixed on the distant sea, also blue, luminous, and as it were throbbing with mad joy.

“ In the German papers it is reported that my youngest brother, Petinka, had a narrow escape from being killed

by a thunderbolt this summer at Peterhof. The nurse, who was carrying him, almost died from the shock; the soldier in attendance was actually killed. The babe's health has suffered ever since. And yet what attention, what care has been bestowed on him! It is evident he won't live long. Poor Petinka! his young soul is innocent before God. He is suffering, not for his own, but for his parents' sins. Lord have mercy upon him. Here again is a clear manifestation of God's will. I cannot understand how my father does not see it. It is awful to fall into the hands of the living God!"

"Who of the senators will espouse your cause?" suddenly queried Afrossinia; again that same strange spark flashed in her eyes and instantly died, as if a candle had been carried behind a curtain.

"And why should you trouble your head about it?" The Tsarevitch looked at her with surprise, he seemed to have entirely forgotten her presence, and only now realized that she had been listening to him the whole time. Afrossinia did not repeat her question; yet they both felt that a scarcely perceptible cloud had passed between them.

"Though they are not all my enemies, yet being cowards, and hankering after my father's goodwill, they all pretend they are," continued the Tsarevitch. "Never mind, I am in no particular need of them. I spit upon them all, if only the common people are staunch to me!" This was his favourite expression. "When Tsar, I will turn all the old senators out and replace them by new ones of my own choice. I will lighten the peasants' burden, give them a chance to breathe. I will reduce the Boyars' snug incomes; they have been fattening on them for long enough; I will provide for the peasantry, the weaker and poorer. They are the lesser brethren of Christ. I will institute a Church and a Zemski Sobor drawn from all classes: let everybody freely and fearlessly inform the Tsar of what is true, so that both State and Church could be reformed by a general council and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, henceforth and for ever more."

He dreamt aloud, and his dreams grew more and more misty, less and less real. Suddenly a cruel, poignant thought stung his heart like a gadfly: "All this is idle

talk, nothing like it will ever happen. The blue tit spread his own fame far and wide, yet when it came to action he failed to set the sea on fire."

He saw himself side by side with his father, the giant who was forging a new Russia; while he with his dreams was but a boy blowing soap-bubbles. How could he possibly vie with his father?

But he resolutely shook this thought off like some tiresome fly. Nothing can happen without God's will. Let my father go on forging his iron—he only does what pleases him—meanwhile God has His own purpose. The iron will burst like a soap bubble, if God wills it.

The Tsarevitch again abandoned himself to visions. The sense of power had given way to a general feeling of languid weakness. With a smile, more and more serene, he sat listening, as in a trance, to the dull roaring of the sea; and there was something familiar in the roaring; something he had heard long ago seemed again to strike his ear; was it his grandmother's lullaby? or was it the siren bird pouring forth her melodious strains?

"And after I have provided for the country and eased the lot of the peasants, I will set out with a large army and fleet for Constantinople, drive away the Turk, free the Slavs from the yoke of the unfaithful, and reinstate the cross on St. Sophia. Then I will call an oecumenical council to bring about the union of all churches; I will give peace to the world, and nations from all corners of the world will flock towards St. Sophia, the Wisdom of God, unto the holy kingdom, to meet the coming Christ."

Afrossinia had long since left off listening; she had been continuously yawning and making the sign of the cross over her mouth. At last she got up, stretching and scratching herself. "I feel tired; waiting for that German this afternoon cost me my sleep. Hadn't I better go to bed, Alexis?"

"Yes, my dear one, do go, God protect you. I too may come after a while; only I must first feed the doves."

She went into the adjoining room, their bedchamber, while the Tsarevitch went out on the balcony, where the doves were already collecting, waiting to be fed. He threw some crumbs and grains to them, calling in a low

gentle voice : "Coo! coo! coo!" And just as in Roshdest-veno, the doves flocked to his feet, wheeled in circles over his head, perched on his shoulders and arms, covered him as it were with wings. He looked down upon the sea : in the tremulous waving of wings he imagined he was flying away into that boundless space, across the blue deep, towards the luminous, bright Hagia Sophia, the Wisdom of God. The sensation of flight was so real, that his heart sank and his head grew dizzy. He got frightened. He closed his eyes, and convulsively gripped the balustrade. It seemed to him he no longer was flying, but falling.

With faltering steps he returned to the room. At the same moment Afrossinia came in ; she had undressed, and was wearing nothing but her chemise ; climbing on to a chair she trimmed the little lamp before the holy image. It was an old representation of the Mother of all the Sorrowing, beloved by the Tsarevitch, who never parted from it.

"What a fault ! To-morrow is the Heavenly Queen's Assumption, and I had forgotten all about it. Fancy leaving her, our Lady, without a lamp ! Will you read the lauds, Alexis ? Shall I get the reading desk ready ?"

On the eve of each great feast, as he had no chaplain, he used to officiate himself, reading the lauds, and chanting the psalms.

"No, not yet, dearest, perhaps a little later on. I feel tired, my head aches."

"You should drink less wine, Alexis."

"It is not the wine, but my thoughts ; the news was so joyous."

Afrossinia, on her way to the bedroom, stopped at the table to select from the basket which the German had brought her, a ripe peach ; she enjoyed eating a dainty before going to sleep.

The Tsarevitch came up and embraced her.

"Afrossinia, my dearest, aren't you glad ? You will be queen—and he, the babe——"

He was persuaded that Afrossinia would bear him a son. She was the third month with child. "You are my gold, and the boy will be our silver," he would tell her in moments of tenderness.

"Yes, you will be the Tsaritsa, your boy the heir.

We will call him Ivan, the most pious Tsar, Ivan Alexsevitch, Autocrat of all the Russias."

She gently freed herself from his embrace, looked across her shoulder to see whether the lamp was burning all right, took a bite from her peach, and then calmly answered him :—

"You are talking idly. How can I, a servant, become a Tsaritsa ?"

"I'll marry you, then you can't help being one ! My father did just the same. His wife, Catherine, belongs to no distinguished family ; she used to wash linen with the Finnish women, her companions ; a chemise was all she wore when taken a prisoner, and yet *she* reigns. You, also, Afrossinia Fédorovna, will be a Tsaritsa, and no worse than others."

He wanted to tell her all he felt, yet knew not how to express it. He wanted to tell her the main idea of his life—that it was just because she was of the people he had loved her ; though he was the son of the Tsar, he felt he too belonged to the people. He did not share the noble's pride, but loved the simplicity of the common folk. It is from them that he would accept the crown. Good must be repaid by good. The common people will make him Tsar, and he will make her, Afrossinia, the serf-girl, a Tsaritsa.

She remained silent, her eyes cast down, and her face revealing little beyond an unmistakeable longing for sleep. But he pressed her closer and closer to himself, conscious of the freshness of her naked body concealed by the thin material. She resisted, and tried to free herself. Suddenly by accident he caught the chemise which was kept together by a single button on the shoulder. It gave way, and the chemise slipped off and fell to her feet.

She stood before him naked, amidst the brilliancy of her tawny golden hair alone. The beauty spot over her left brow was strangely enticing. Again there was something faun-like, shining, mysterious and wild in her almond-shaped eyes.

"Let me go Alexis, I am ashamed, let me go !"

If she felt shame, she did not feel it very acutely. She turned aside her head a little with her usual indolent, slightly mocking smile ; and remained, always under his

caresses, cold, innocent, almost virginal, notwithstanding the scarcely perceptible swelling curve which revealed her pregnancy. Her body seemed to glide out of his embracing arms, to become ethereal and melt away like a phantom.

"Afrossinia!" he whispered, trying to retain the vision, and suddenly he fell on his knees before her.

"For shame," she repeated, "on the eve of a holy day, and when the lamp is burning, sin! sin!"

Yet the next minute she raised with listless indifference a peach to her parted lips, red and fresh as the fruit itself.

"She is right, it is sin," the old thought flashed across his mind. "With woman began sin, root of all our death."

Involuntarily he too glanced back at the holy image; just such an image as this had fallen out of his father's hands one stormy night in the Summer Garden and broken at the foot of the Petersburg Venus, the white she-devil.

Afrossinia stood against the door which opened on the blue sea, and her body, glowing and white like the foam of waves, seemed to have freshly left them and arisen from the surging deep. In one hand she held the fruit, with the other she shielded her nakedness, like the Foam-born. Behind her frothed and sparkled the blue sea, an ambrosial cup, and the noise of its ripples suggested the eternal laughter of the gods.

It was that same girl Afrossinia, who, one evening in early spring, bending low over her naked feet, had been washing the floor in the house of Viasemski. It was that girl and the goddess Aphrodite merged into one.

"Venus, Venus, the White Witch!" thought the Tsarevitch, almost ready to flee from her. But from the body of this innocent sinner, as from an open flower, there came to him a familiar, intoxicating, awful perfume; no longer master of himself he bent lower still and kissed her feet, and, looking into her eyes, whispered as in prayer:

"Tsaritsa, my Tsaritsa."

Meantime the dim flame of the little lamp was flickering to and fro before the sacred and sorrowful Face.

CHAPTER IV

COUNT DAUN, the Imperial Viceroy of Naples, invited the Tsarevitch to an evening interview at the royal palace on September 26.

During the last few days the atmosphere had indicated the approach of the sirocco, that African wind which carries with it clouds of hot sand from the depths of the Sahara. The storm was probably already raging in the upper regions of the air, while on the earth there was absolute calm; the leaves of the palms and branches of mimosa hung motionless. The sea alone was agitated; huge foamless ridges swelled up and broke on the shore with heavy rumbling. The distance was shrouded in dense gloom, and the sun in the cloudless heavens was seen dimly as through a smoked opal. The air was permeated with the finest dust which penetrated everywhere, even into well-closed rooms; it covered white sheets of paper and the pages of books with a grey layer; it made the teeth gritty, it inflamed eyes and throats. It was close, and hourly became more stifling. In nature there was the same feeling as in the body round a tumour. Men and animals were restless, tossed about in distress. The people were expectant of some calamity; war, or pestilence, or perhaps an eruption of Vesuvius.

And really in the night from the 23rd to the 24th September, the inhabitants of Torre del Greco, Resina and Portici felt the first underground shocks. Lava appeared. The glowing avalanche was already nearing the uppermost vineyards, planted on the slopes of the hill. To appease God's wrath penitential processions were inaugurated, with burning candles, subdued singing and loud sobbing. But God's wrath was not appeased.

A thick black smoke rose from Vesuvius in the daytime, as from some furnace, spreading out in the shape of a long

cloud from Castellamare to Posilippo. At night the red flames were visible like the glow from some great subterranean fire. The peaceful altar of the gods was transformed into the terrible torch of the Eumenides.

At last in Naples itself the first rumble of the earthquake, like underground thunder, was heard. The ancient Titans were again awaking. The town was terror-stricken. The days of Sodom and Gomorrah were recalled. At night when all was quiet, somewhere in the chinks of the window, or under the door, or in the chimney there would rise a low-pitched piping like the hum of a mosquito. It was Sirocco beginning his song. The noise grew louder and stronger, and at the moment when it was expected to burst into furious howling, suddenly died away, and again stillness ensued, only more deathlike. It seemed as if the evil spirits below held converse with one another about the terrible day of the Lord.

During these days the Tsarevitch felt indisposed; but the doctor reassured him that this was only the ordinary effect of the sirocco upon those not used to it, and prescribed a cooling medicine, which seemed to ease him.

On the appointed day and hour he drove to the palace for his interview with the Viceroy. The officer on duty met him in the antechamber and gave him a polite excuse from Count Daun, asking his Highness to wait a few moments in the reception hall, as the Viceroy had been obliged to absent himself on some urgent business. Alexis entered the huge, lonely reception hall furnished with a gloomy, almost sinister, Spanish luxury: blood-red silk tapestries, an excess of heavy gilt decorations; cupboards carved in black wood resembling tombs; mirrors, so dim that they reflected spectres. On the walls large dark canvasses, religious paintings by old masters: Roman soldiers, looking very much like butchers, were burning, kicking, sawing and in sundry other ways torturing Christian martyrs; it reminded one of a slaughter-house or a torture chamber of the Holy Inquisition. Across the ceiling amid the gilt scrolls and shells was a representation of the Triumph of the Olympian Gods. This abortion, bastard offspring of some follower of Titian and Rubens, marked the end of the Renaissance, in which refined effeminacy had become a

barbarian savagery, brutalizing art. Masses of nude bodies, nude flesh, fat backs, puffed-out pleated bellies, sprawling feet, monstrous breasts; these swine-fed gods and goddesses, and the little amorette very much like sucking pigs, all this beast-like Olympus seemed predestined for the Christian shambles; for the torture-instruments of the holy Inquisition.

The Tsarevitch walked up and down the room for some time; at last he got tired and sat down. Dusk was creeping in through the windows and grey shadows, like spiders, were spinning their webs in the corner. Only here and there a bright gilt lion's paw, or the pointed breast of a griffin, supporting the bloodstone or malachite slabs of tables, broke the gloom; the candelabra, shrouded in muslin, dimly glittered with their crystal pendants, like gigantic cocoons beaded with dew. This mass of nude fleshy bodies, fat and pagan on the ceiling, suffering Christians round the walls, only seemed to augment the stifling effects of the sirocco. His attention was arrested by a picture, which, unlike the others, was a bright spot among them; it represented a girl nude to her waist, with auburn hair, an almost childlike innocent bosom, clear yellow eyes and a vacant smile on her lips. In the raised corners of her mouth the wild natural smile and the almond-shaped eyes there was something resembling Afrossinia. All at once there came to him an indistinct feeling that there was some connection between this smile and the stifling oppressiveness of the sirocco. It was a poor picture, a copy of an old work belonging to the Lombard school, probably by a pupil of Leonardo's pupil. This vacant yet still mysterious smile was a last reflection from the face of Naples' noble citizen Monna Lisa Gioconda.

The Tsarevitch was surprised at having to wait so long for the Viceroy, who was always so exceedingly polite; and where was Weingart? Why this death-like stillness in the castle?

He wanted to get up and call for candles; but some strange torpor paralyzed him. That grey cobweb, which the shadows, like spiders, had woven in the corners, twined and clung round him; he was too lazy to move; his eyes were heavy, he vainly tried to keep them open, nevertheless he

fell asleep. It was for a few moments only, yet when he woke it seemed to him he had slept a long time. He had dreamt something unpleasant, something he could no longer recall, but which had left a feeling of untold weariness in his soul, and again there was somehow a link between this dream, the vacant smile of the red-haired girl, and the growing suffocation caused by the sirocco. When he opened his eyes he saw just in front of him a pale, spectre-like face. For a long time he could not make it out ; at last he recognized his own face reflected in the dim pierglass before the armchair in which he had fallen asleep. The same mirror reflected a door just behind his back. Was not the dream going on ? The door will suddenly burst open and let in something terrible, something he cannot define, yet dimly remembers.

The door opened noiselessly ; on its threshold appeared lighted tapers and figures. Still looking at the glass without turning round he recognized one face, then another, then a third. He jumped up and held his hands out in the desperate hope that all this was only an apparition, but the same figure stood before him as in the mirror, and a cry of boundless terror escaped his breast :—

“ It is He ! He ! He !——”

Alexis would have fallen had not the secretary Weingart supported him.

“ Water ! water ! the Tsarevitch is ill.”

Weingart led him back to the armchair, and Alexis saw bending over him the kind old face of Count Daun, who gently stroked his shoulder and held some spirit to his nose.

“ Calm yourself, for God’s sake calm yourself ! Nothing bad has happened. We bring the best of news.”

Alexis drank the water, his teeth knocked against the glass. Unable to take his eyes off the door, he was trembling all over as in a high fever.

“ How many came in ? he asked Count Daun in a whisper.

“ Two your Highness—only two.”

“ And the third, I saw a third.”

“ You have probably imagined it.”

“ No, I saw him, where is he ? ”

“ Who ? ”

“ My father ! ”

The old man looked at him in amazement.

"The sirocco is responsible for this," explained Weingart. "A flow of blood to the head; it often happens so. Ever since this morning blue rings dance before my eyes. Be bled, and you will soon be relieved."

"I saw him," repeated Alexis. "By God, it was no dream! I saw him, Count, as plainly as I see you now."

"Dear me," exclaimed the old man with sincere sorrow, "had I but known that your Highness did not feel well I would never have allowed——Even now it is quite possible to defer the interview."

"No, no, it's all the same. I want to know," murmured Alexis. "Let the old man alone approach me! Don't let the other one come near."

He gripped his hand.

"For God's sake don't let *that* one come near me; look at him——He has been sent by the Tsar to kill me! I know it!"

His face expressed such terror, that the Viceroy said to himself. "Who can depend on these barbarians? It might really be true," and he remembered the Emperor's words in the original instructions:

"Special precautions must be taken during the interview so that any assault may be frustrated. (The Muscovites are a desperate people, capable of anything.) However, I myself do not anticipate anything of the sort."

"I pledge my life and honour that no harm will come to you. Trust me, your Highness."

The Viceroy whispered to Weingart to have the sentinels doubled.

Meanwhile Peter Tolstoi was approaching the Tsarevitch with inaudible gliding steps, arched breast, a deferential air and lowest courtesies. His companion, Roumiantzev, Captain of the Guards, the Tsar's orderly, of giant stature with an open handsome face resembling a Roman soldier and the Russian national hero, stopped at some distance near the door, at a sign from the Viceroy.

"Gracious Lord Tsarevitch, your Highness! a letter from your father," said Tolstoi, and bending lower still so that the left hand almost touched the ground, he tendered with his right the letter.

The Tsarevitch recognised his father's handwriting in the laconic "To my Son," on the outside. He broke the seal with trembling hand and read :—

"MY SON,—

"It is generally known what disobedience and contempt for my will you have shown, and that neither words nor punishment could persuade you to follow out my instructions. Before I went you succeeded in deceiving me by vows ; and what came next ? You left, and, like a traitor, placed yourself under a stranger's protection ! A thing unheard of, either among our children or among our subjects. Having thus caused grief and annoyance to your father, and shame to your country, I send you now this last message, that you should conform to my will, and do as M. Tolstoi and Roumiantzev will tell you. If you do as I wish you, I give you hope and promise in the sight of God that no punishment shall be inflicted on you. I will show you even greater love should you obey and return to me. If on the contrary you remain obstinate, then I, your father, by the power given to me by God, will curse you for all eternity. As your sovereign I will declare you a traitor, and I will employ all means to pursue you. God will help me in the work.

"Remember also, that so far, I have not used violence with you ; if I had, why should I have depended on your good will ? I would have acted as pleased me.

"PETER."

Having read the letter, Alexis again glanced at Roumiantzev who bowed and tried to come nearer. But Alexis, pale and trembling, rose from his chair and said : "Peter Andreitch, don't let him come near me, else I will at once leave you. Don't you hear the Count also forbids him to come near."

Tolstoi made a sign to Roumiantzev, who stopped short ; his handsome but unintelligent face looked perplexed.

Weingart offered a chair. Tolstoi drew it near to the Tsarevitch and sat down in a respectful attitude ; he stooped, looked into his eyes with an open confident gaze and began to talk. He spoke as if nothing special had happened and they had just met for a friendly chat.

Tolstoi had remained the same elegant chevalier, his excellency the privy councillor. Black velvety eyebrows, a soft velvety look in his eyes, an amiable velvety smile, an insinuating velvety voice, all smooth and velvety, yet velvet with a fang.

The Tsarevitch listened to his conversation with pleasure, though he could not help remembering his father's saying, "Tolstoi is a clever man; but in speaking with him it is well to keep a stone ready in your sling." His sensible, business-like words calmed Alexis, roused him from those terrible dreams and brought him back to reality. Everything seemed to be smoothed over and softened down; it seemed possible to arrange matters that the wolves should be satisfied and the sheep remain whole. He spoke like some experienced old surgeon who tries to convince his patient that a difficult operation is insignificant, almost pleasant.

"Use kindness and threats; for the rest employ arguments appropriate to the circumstances," ran the Tsar's instruction, and had Peter heard him he would have been well pleased.

Tolstoi confirmed in words what was written in the letter—absolute pardon and grace should the Tsarevitch return. After that, Tolstoi quoted at length the Tsar's words from his own instructions bearing on the interview with the Emperor; there was a new accent of firmness sounding in his usually pleasant and amiable voice.

"Should the Emperor say that, our son, having placed himself under his protection, he cannot deliver him up against his will, or should he bring forward any other such excuses and fanciful apprehensions, put it before him, that we cannot but feel hurt that he tries to arbitrate between us and our son; when by natural law, and especially by the law of our country, no one can interfere between father and son, not even in private families: the son must obey his father. And we, an autocratic monarch, are in no wise subject to the Emperor, and he has no right to interfere, but ought to send our son to us. We, as a father and sovereign, following the dictates of our duty, will graciously receive him and forgive him this, his misdeed, and will instruct him so that he, forsaking his old sinful ways, may walk in the paths of

virtue and follow out our intentions, could then regain our fatherly affection. His Imperial Majesty will benefit him, as well as earn a recompense from God and gratitude from us. Our son too will in the end be more thankful for this than for being kept, as he now is, under strict watch, a prisoner or malefactor under the name of some treacherous Hungarian Count, to the injury of our honour and name. Yet should the Emperor flatly refuse, then declare, that we take this to be an open breach and rupture, and we shall carry our complaint before all the world, and will then seek and strive to revenge such an insufferable insult."

"Bah!" interrupted the Tsarevitch, "my father will never wage war against the Emperor because of me."

"I don't think there will be war," agreed Tolstoi. "The Emperor will give you up without war; he does not benefit by your stay in his dominions; on the contrary, grave difficulties arise from it. He has fulfilled his promise towards you; he has protected you until you were pardoned by your father; and now the pardon has come, the Emperor has no further obligations; he is not obliged to keep you against all rights and begin a war with the Tsar, especially as he already has two wars on hand—with the Turks and the Spaniards; you probably know yourself that the Spanish fleet is now stationed between Naples and Sardinia, ready to attack Naples, for the nobility have arranged a plot, preferring Spanish to the Imperial rule. If you don't believe me, ask the Viceroy! He has received a letter in the Emperor's own handwriting to use all measures to persuade you to follow your father's wishes; or at any rate to leave his dominions. And should they not give you up freely, the Tsar is willing to use arms. This is why he keeps his army in Poland. He will quarter them for the winter in Silesia, and from there it is not far to the Emperor's dominions."

Tolstoi looked into his eyes with still greater kindness, and gently touched his hand:—

"My Lord Tsarevitch, listen to your parent's entreaties; return to him! 'And we will,' these are his exact words, 'receive him back into our favour and promise to keep him in freedom and plenty, without anger or constraint.'"

The Tsarevitch remained silent.

"Should he refuse," continued Tolstoi with a heavy sigh,

“declare to him in my name that for such disobedience, we will proclaim him, after having cursed him, a traitor to the state. Let him consider what his life will be then. Let him not think he will be out of danger, no, not unless he is in life-long imprisonment and under strict watch. Thus he will earn not only suffering for his soul in the future, but bodily pain in this present life. We shall not tire in discovering all possible ways and means to punish him. Even if it must be, we will with arms force the Emperor to deliver him up. Let him consider the consequences.”

Tolstoi stopped, waiting for an answer, but the Tsarevitch remained silent. At last he lifted his eyes and intently gazed at Tolstoi.

“How old are you, Peter Tolstoi?”

“Since there are no ladies present, I may confess I am past seventy,” replied the old man with an amiable smile.

“If I remember rightly, seventy is the limit of man’s life, according to the Scriptures. How could you, Peter Andreitch, with one foot in the grave, undertake such a mission as this? I always thought you had some affection for me.”

“And so I have, God knows it; I am ready to serve you to my very last breath. I only have one desire, to reconcile you to your father. It is a good work; it is written ‘Blessed are the peacemakers.’”

“Don’t tell lies, old man! Do you really think I don’t know why you both have been sent here? I am not surprised at Roumiantzev, but you, Tolstoi, to lift your arm on the future Tsar and sovereign? You are both murderers. My father has despatched you to kill me.”

Tolstoi raised his hands in terror.

“God is your judge, Tsarevitch.”

There was such sincerity in his voice and face, that, notwithstanding his close acquaintance with him, Alexis wondered if he had been mistaken in him and wronged an innocent old man. But suddenly he laughed, even his anger passed away, there was so much singleheartedness, innocent bewitchery, in this lie; it was like the artfulness of women, and the play of a great actor.

“You are a sly fox, Tolstoi, only no slyness will succeed in luring the sheep into the wolves’ jaws.”

“Is it the father you believe to be a wolf?”

"Wolf or no wolf, if ever I should fall into his hands not one of my bones will remain whole. Why should we two try to mystify one another? You know the truth as well as I do."

"Alexis Petrovitch, it is all very well doubting my words, but see here, in the Tsar's own handwriting, 'I promise before God—'Don't you hear, he swears by God. Will it be possible for the Tsar to break his oath in the sight of Europe?"

"What does he care for oaths?" interrupted Alexis, "if he cannot get out of them himself, Theodosius will absolve him. The archdeacons won't lag behind, and the absolution will be granted by the Council. It is something to be a Russian autocrat. Two people on earth consider themselves gods, the Tsar and the Pope. They do exactly what pleases them. No, Tolstoi, don't waste words! You won't get me alive."

Tolstoi took from his pocket a golden snuff-box. On its lid was depicted a shepherd loosening the girdle of a sleeping shepherdess. Without any haste, in his usual way he took a pinch, lowered his head on his breast, and said, as if to himself, deliberately:

"There is nothing for it, then; do as suits you best. You will not listen to me, may be you will listen to your father, he will be here ere long himself."

"Where! Here? are you again lying?" gasped the Tsarevitch, growing pale and looking round at the door.

Tolstoi leisurely, put the pinch first in one nostril, then in the other, sniffed, shook off the dust with a handkerchief from his lace front, and said:—

"I had no orders to inform you about it, still it seems I have let it out. I received some time ago a letter from the Tsar, telling me of his immediate departure for Italy. Who can prohibit a father interviewing his son? Don't imagine this to be impossible, there is not the slightest difficulty, everything depends on the Tsar's own wish, and for the rest, you know yourself of the Tsar's desire to visit Italy. And now this circumstance has quite decided him."

He hung his head lower still and his face suddenly seemed to contract and grow old; he seemed on the verge of crying, a tear appeared; and again the Tsarevitch heard words he

had often heard : " Where can you hide yourself from your father, only in the grave—he will find you everywhere else. The Tsar's arm reaches far. I am sorry for you, my dear Alexis Petrovitch."

The Tsarevitch had again risen and as at the beginning of the interview trembled all over.

" Wait Peter Andreitch, I must say a word or two to the Count."

He took the Viceroy's hand and together they left the room. Having ascertained that the doors were locked, the Tsarevitch retold his conversation with Tolstoi, and then, seizing the old man's hands with his cold hands he asked :—

" Suppose my father will demand me with arms, can I still depend on the Emperor's protection ?"

" Don't be troubled, your Highness; the Emperor is strong enough to defend those under his protection at all costs."

" I know, Count, but I don't speak to you now as the Viceroy, but as a noble chevalier and a kindhearted man. You have always been good to me, tell me the whole truth. Don't hide anything from me, Count. Leave politics alone, tell me the truth, oh God ! you see how I suffer." He burst into tears and gazed at him with the look of a hunted animal. The old man involuntarily cast down his eyes.

Count Daun, tall, haggard with a pale thin face, slightly reminding one of Don Quixote, was a weak indecisive man. An assistant and politician, he was continually wavering between the old traditions, chivalrous but antipolitical, and the new duties, political but antichivalrous. He felt deep sympathy with the Tsarevitch, yet he feared to entangle himself in some responsible affair—it was the fear of a swimmer, himself in difficult straits, gripped by a half-drowning man.

Alexis fell on his knees before him :—

" I implore the Emperor in the name of God and all the saints not to forsake me ! It is awful to think what will happen once I get into my father's hands. No one else knows what manner of man he is. I know."

The old man bent over him. Tears stood in his eyes.

" Get up, get up, your Highness ! I swear by the Lord that I tell you the plain truth, without any politics. So far as

I know the Emperor, nothing will induce him to deliver you up to your father. Such an action would be degrading to the honour of his Majesty and against universal justice, a sign of barbarism." He embraced the Tsarevitch and kissed him with fatherly tenderness.

When they returned to the Reception Hall, Alexis' face, though still pale, was calm and resolute. He approached Tolstoi, and neither sitting down himself nor inviting him to do so, gave him to understand that the audience was over, saying :—

"It is dangerous to return into my father's angered presence. The reason why I dare not return I will explain in a letter to my protector, his Imperial Majesty. I may also write to my father in reply to his letter, which will be my definite answer. At present I can say nothing, for this matter requires consideration."

"If your Highness has any conditions let me know them," Tolstoi began in his insinuating voice, "I believe your father will consent to everything. He will even permit you to wed Afrossinia. Think it well over; you might see it in a different light to-morrow morning. We shall have enough time to talk it over, we have not met for the last time."

"There is nothing for us to discuss, and nothing to meet for. How long do you intend staying here?"

"I am ordered," replied Tolstoi in a low voice, and the Tsarevitch thought he saw his father's look in Tolstoi's eyes, "I am ordered not to leave this place without you. And should you be removed somewhere else I must follow you."

Then he added in a lower voice :

"Your father will not rest until he has got you, either alive or dead."

The velvety paw had shown its claws, and then promptly drawn them in again. He again made a deep bow, even tried to kiss Alexis' hand, but the latter pulled it away.

"Your lordship's most devoted servant!"

He retired with Roumiantzev through the same door by which they had come in."

The Tsarevitch followed them with his eyes; and then for a long time stared at the door, as if some fearful vision

had again flashed upon him. At last he sank into a chair, covered his face with his hands, shrank and stooped as under some terrible load.

Count Daun put his hand on his shoulder ; he tried to say something consoling, but feeling there was nothing to be said, he silently joined Weingart.

"The Emperor insists " he whispered, "that the Tsarevitch should rid himself of that woman he has with him. I had not the courage to tell him this to-day. Will you tell him at some better opportunity ?"

CHAPTER V

“ I AM confronted with great difficulties in the execution of my plans,” wrote Tolstoi to the Resident Vessel-óvsky in Vienna. “ Our child will never dream of leaving unless he despairs of protection. Hence much would be gained if your grace would have the report widely circulated that he will not be protected by arms, for this is what he has staked his hopes upon. We must be grateful to the Viceroy for his zealous help, but, none the less, we cannot break that cursed stubbornness. I can’t write more just now because I am going to our prey and the post is leaving.”

Tolstoi had before now been in great difficulties, but he always succeeded in getting out of them unhurt. When young he took part in the Streltsi mutiny; all others perished, he alone escaped.

At fifty, with a wife and children, being at the time a governor of a province, he offered together with “ the young scions of Russia ” to go abroad to learn navigation ; and he learnt it. During his ambassadorship at Constantinople he was thrice imprisoned in the dungeons of the Castle of the Seven Towers, and thrice he came out ; and later gained the Tsar’s special favour. Once his private secretary charged him in writing with having appropriated money belonging to the state ; but the sudden death of the secretary took place before the despatch of the letter.

Tolstoi explained thus : “ Timothy, the clerk, became acquainted with the Turks and thought he would join the infidels. By God’s help I learnt about it. I called him to me, talked seriously to him, and then locked him up in my room until evening ; during the night he drank a glass of wine and died soon afterwards. In this fashion God saved him from his crimes.”

It was to some purpose that he studied and translated into Russian the *Political Discourses* of Niccolo Machiavelli, the noble Florentine citizen. Tolstoi himself passed for a Russian Machiavelli. "O head, head, if I had not known you to be so clever I should have cut you off long ago!" said the Tsar in reference to him. And that was why Tolstoi was now afraid lest in this business with the Tsarevitch this clever head should prove itself foolish and the Russian Machiavelli a dupe. And at the same time he had done all that could have been done; he had enmeshed the Tsarevitch in a fine though strong net; he had made all believe that all secretly desired his extradition, but that, through fear of breaking faith, each was thrusting the responsibility upon others. The Empress was reckoning upon the Emperor, the Emperor upon his chancellor the chancellor upon the Viceroy, the Viceroy upon his secretary. To the last named Tolstoi had given a present of £32, and promised to add more should he succeed in convincing the Tsarevitch that the Emperor would no longer protect him. But all efforts were wrecked by the "cursed stubbornness." The worst was that he had himself asked to be sent on this mission. "Every one should recognise his star," he used to say; and it seemed to him that his star would be the capture of the Tsarevitch, which would be the crown of his official service, he would be decorated with St. Andrew's ribbon, receive the title of Count, and thus become the ancestor of a new house—the Counts Tolstoi, a dream which he had cherished all his life. What would the Tsar say, if he returned alone, without him? Just now, however, he did not think about the loss of the Tsar's favour, the St. Andrew's ribbon, nor the title. Like a true sportsman, forgetting everything else, he had one thought only, that the prey would escape him.

A few days after his first interview with Alexis, Tolstoi was sitting sipping his chocolate at breakfast on the balcony of his luxurious apartments at the Three Kings Hotel, in one of the liveliest streets of Naples, the Via Toledo. He looked very old, almost decrepit, in his dressing gown, with no wig to cover his smooth skull, which showed a scanty remnant of grey hair at the back.

Ovid's "*Metamorphoses*," which he was still translating

into Russian, lay on the table in front of the mirror, together with his own metamorphosis—his youth—a small jar, brushes, and a beautiful wig with youthful coal-black curls.

He was very uneasy. But as always in moments of deep musings about political affairs, he wore an unconcerned, almost heedless expression. He exchanged glances with his pretty neighbour who was also sitting on her balcony across the road. She was a black-eyed Spaniard, one of the class who according to Æsop “are not very much inclined to live by manual labour.” He smiled across at her with gallantry, though his smile reminded one of the grin of a death’s head; and hummed a love song of his own, “To the maiden,” an imitation of Anacreon:—

Fly not thus my brow of snow,
 Lovely wanton! fly not so!
 Though the wane of age is mine,
 Though the brilliant flush is thine,
 Still I’m doom’d to sigh for thee,
 Blest, if thou couldst sigh for me!
 See, in yonder flowery braid,
 Cull’d for thee, my blushing maid,
 How the rose, of orient glow,
 Mingles with the lily’s snow;
 Mark, how sweet their tints agree,
 Just, my girl, like thee and me!

Captain Roumiantzev was telling him about his love adventures in Naples. According to Tolstoi, Roumiantzev was a man with a cheerful disposition, and made life pleasant by his company; yet all he had was the courage of a good soldier—in short, he was a fool. But Tolstoi did not despise him for that reason; on the contrary he always listened to him; and would even sometimes act on his advice. “The world is kept going by fools,” remarked Peter Tolstoi. “Cato, the Roman senator, used to say that fools are more necessary to clever men, than clever men to fools.” Roumiantzev was abusing a certain damsel, Camille, for having already lightened him in one week of more than hundred pieces of gold:

“These ladies are too fond of money.”

Peter Tolstoi remembered how he had once had a love affair in Naples, many years ago; he always related the story in the same words:—

"I was innamorato with Signora Francesca, and she was my mistress during the whole of that visit, I was so enamoured that I could not do without her, not even an hour, and she cost me a thousand gold pieces in those two months. I felt keenly leaving her; even to this day the affair remains for me the tenderest of recollections."

He sighed languidly and smiled across to the pretty neighbour.

"And what about our 'prey?' " he suddenly asked with a nonchalant air, as though it were a matter of very secondary importance to him. Roumiantzev related to him a conversation he had had yesterday with the sailor, Youroff, "nicknamed Æsop." Frightened by Tolstoi's threat to send him to Petersburg as a deserter, Youroff, notwithstanding his devotion to the Tsarevitch, agreed to become a spy, to report all he saw or heard in the latter's house. Much of what Roumiantzev had heard about the great love of Alexis for Afrossinia proved to be of considerable interest and importance for Tolstoi's calculations. The girl holds him by his sensuous nature; she is his confidant night and day; she has gained such power over him that he dare gainsay her in nothing. She has absolute mastery over him, he does exactly as she bids him, he wants to marry her, only he cannot find a priest; else they would have been wedded long since. He also told about his interview with Afrossinia, an interview which owing to Æsop and Weingart, had been arranged without the knowledge of the Tsarevitch, during his absence.

"A distinguished-looking woman, taking her all round, only red-haired; in appearance very meek and harmless as a dove, but in reality probably unmanageable; still waters run deep."

"And how did it seem to you," asked Tolstoi, on whom a sudden thought had flashed, "is there any chance? Is she the sort to fall in love?"

"With a view to make our 'prey' jealous as the devil?" rejoined Roumiantzev, "well, she'd probably be like the rest of women; only there is no one for her."

"Why not yourself, Roumiantzev? Don't be afraid, it would flatter any woman to associate with a fine fellow like you," cunningly suggested Tolstoi.

The captain laughed, and complacently twisted his moustache, which imitated the fashion set by the Tsar.

"Camille is enough for me, what should I do with two mistresses?"

Tolstoi sang:

"Double flames make virtue vain!
Though thy heart love ladies twain
New love need not old love smother.
First serve one and then the other.
Capture one, then two, and then
All the rest, though there be ten!"

"What a wag your Excellency is," laughed Roumiantzev, showing two rows of white, even teeth, "Grey hair in the beard, but a devil of a fellow inside!" Tolstoi replied by another ditty:—

"The women tell me every day
That all my bloom has passed away.
"Behold," the pretty wantons cry,
"Behold this mirror with a sigh;
The locks upon thy brow are few,
And, like the rest, they are withering too!"
Whether decline has thinn'd my hair,
I'm sure I neither know nor care;
But this I know, and this I feel,
As onward to the tomb I steal,
That still as death approaches nearer,
The joys of life are sweeter, dearer;
And since I've but an hour to live,
That little hour to bliss I give!"

"Listen Roumiantzev," he continued, growing serious; "instead of wasting your time with Camille, why not make love to that distinguished young lady? It might help us with the matter in hand. We might so entangle our child in jealousy that he, unable to find a way out, would fall into our clutches. For us cavaliers there is no allurements like a woman!"

"Peter Andreitch, what are you thinking about? Good gracious, I thought you were joking, and here you are quite serious. It is a ticklish job. Suppose he becomes Tsar and learn about this little adventure, my neck won't escape his axe."

"Oh, nonsense! that Alexis will ever be Tsar is written on

water ; that Peter will reward you most handsomely is quite certain. Roumiantzev, my friend, render me this service and I will never forget you."

" Really, your Excellency, I don't know how to tackle a job like this."

" We'll tackle it together. It is not very difficult. I'll teach you how. All you will have to do is to obey."

Roumiantzev vainly sought to get out of it, yet at last yielded. Tolstoi explained to him the plan of action.

When he had gone, Tolstoi fell once more into musings worthy of a Russian Machiavelli.

For some time past he had had a vague idea that only Afrossinia could, if she would, persuade Alexis to return. The night bird can outsing the day bird ; she at any rate was their last hope. He had written the Tsar : " It is impossible to exaggerate the passion he has for this girl, and how much he thinks about her." He also remembered Weingart's words : " He dreads returning lest his father should separate him from that girl. I would like to use the threat, that she will immediately be taken from him if he refuses to return to his father. Although I cannot put my threat into execution without a special decree, yet we can see what the result would be."

Tolstoi decided to go at once to the Viceroy, and ask him to command the Tsarevitch, in accordance with the Emperor's will, to send Afrossinia away. " Besides, there is Roumiantzev's love affair !" thought he, and such hope possessed him that his heart began to beat faster and faster. " Aid us, Mother Venus ! Where clever politicians fail, a foolish lover may succeed."

He had grown quite cheerful, and looking at his Spanish neighbour hummed with unassumed playfulness :—

See how fair in posies
With white lilies twineth
Red of roses !

And the little coquette, hiding her fan, and showing from under her black lace skirt a pretty foot in silver slippers, and pink stockings embroidered with golden arrows, ogled, and smiled slyly. And it seemed as though in this girl, Dame Fortune herself, as so often before, was again smiling,

promising him success, decoration, and the title of Count.

Going inside to complete his toilette, he threw a kiss across the road with the most gracious of smiles.

The bald head smiled at wanton Fortune.

The Tsarevitch suspected Æsop of being a spy and in secret communication with Tolstoi and Roumiantzev. He sent him away and forbade him to come near him ; but one day when he returned home unexpectedly he ran against him on the staircase. Æsop on seeing him grew pale and quaked like a captured thief. The Tsarevitch perceived that he was stealing up to Afrossinia with some secret message, and taking him by the collar, threw him down the stairs. A round tin box which he had been carefully concealing fell from Æsop's pocket. The Tsarevitch picked it up. It was a box of chocolates ; in its cover lay a note which began :—

“Gracious Lady Afrossinia Fedorevna !

“Since my heart is not a block of wood but has been endowed with the tenderest of feelings.” And ended with the verses.

I cannot quench this fire
Sick with a vain desire.
Without thee, O believe me,
Wasting am I and dull,
If thou deny me, life is null,
Vesuvius shall receive me!

Instead of a signature the initials, A. R. “Alexander Roumiantzev,” guessed the Tsarevitch.

He had sufficient courage and resolution to conceal his discovery from Afrossinia.

The same day Weingart informed him of the Emperor's decree that should the Tsarevitch desire further protection he must without delay send Afrossinia away. In reality no such decree had come. Weingart was only carrying out his promise to Tolstoi. “I will try to frighten him ; and though I cannot put the threat into execution without a special decree, yet we can see what the result will be.”

CHAPTER VI

ON the night of October 1, the sirocco at last broke out. The storm howled with special fury round the summit of St. Elmo. Inside the castle, even in the closely shut up rooms, the noise of the wind was as intense as in the cabin of a ship in tempest. Through the voice of the air-storm which sounded now like the howling of a wolf, now like the sobs of a child, now like the frantic stampede of a herd of buffaloes, now like the gnashing and whistling of gigantic iron-winged birds, the roll of the sea's breakers resembled the distant rumbling of artillery. It seemed that outside the walls everything was breaking down, the end of the world had come, and that illimitable chaos was raging.

In the apartments of the Tsarevitch it was cold and damp; yet it was impossible to light a fire in the hearth because the wind beat down the smoke. The wind seemed to penetrate the very walls, so that draughts blew through the room, the candles flickered and drops of wax grew cold on them in long, hanging, pointed needles.

The Tsarevitch was hastily walking to and fro; his angular black shadow ran across the white walls, now contracting, now enlarging, now breaking against the ceiling. Afrossinia sat with her feet on an armchair, and while pulling a fur coat around her kept silently following him with her eyes. Her face seemed indifferent; only the corners of the mouth twitched almost imperceptibly, and her fingers twisted and untwisted with monotonous action the golden cord torn off from the fastening of her fur coat. Everything was the same as it was six weeks ago when the joyous news had reached him.

At last the Tsarevitch stopped in front of her and said in a hollow voice :—

“It can't be helped, Afrossinia. Get ready, to-morrow we

will start for Rome, to the Pope. The Cardinal here told me the Pope will receive us under his protection."

Afrossinia shrugged her shoulders :

"Idle talk ! Tsarevitch, when the Emperor refuses to lend his protection to a poor lost girl like me, how can the Pope do so ? He could not because of his clerical position. Besides, he has no army to protect you, should your father appear in force to claim you."

"Then what can be done, Afrossinia ?" he exclaimed, clasping his hands in despair, "a decree from the Emperor has come, to send you away at once. It was difficult to persuade them to wait till the morning ; they can at any moment take you away by force. We must escape, escape at once."

"Escape, where ? they'll catch us anywhere—then it will all come to the same thing. Return to your father !"

"You also, Afrossinia ? I see Tolstoi and Roumiantzev have bamboozled you with their fairy tales ; you have taken it all in."

"Peter Andreitch only wishes you good."

"Good ! What do you know ? Better hold your tongue. Women have long hair, but short wits. Do you expect to escape torture ? Don't you imagine it. Even your condition will stand you in no stead. With us it is no new thing for women to be delivered in the hour of torture, on a strappado."

"But your father promised forgiveness——"

"Oh, I know what that means. That's where he will apply his mercy to me," and he pointed to the back of his head. "Should the Pope refuse we will go to France, England, the Turk, the Swede, to the devil, but not to my father. Never mention it to me again, Afrossinia ! Do you hear ? Never !"

"Well, the decision rests with you, Tsarevitch, only I won't go with you to the Pope," she said in a low voice.

"Not go, what are you thinking about ?"

"I won't," she repeated, calm as ever, fixedly looking at him. "I have already told Peter Andreitch that I won't go anywhere with the Tsarevitch except to his father. Let him go alone where he pleases, but I won't go with him."

"Afrossinia, what are you talking about ? What is the

matter with you ? Be yourself," began Alexis ; he had grown suddenly pale, his voice had changed. " May God pardon you ! How could I live without you."

" Do as you like, Alexis, but I won't go ; so you'd better not ask me." She tore the cord off the buttonhole and threw it on the floor.

" Are you mad, girl ? " he cried, clenching his fists with sudden anger, " if I take you, you will have to go. You assume too much liberty, have you forgotten who you are ? "

" I am what I always was, the faithful servant of his Majesty the Tsar, my sovereign Peter Alexevitch. Where the Tsar commands there will I go. I will do as he wishes. I won't go with you against your father's will."

" Ah, is this how you talk now. You have made friends with Tolstoi and Roumiantzev, my assassins. Is this all your gratitude for my love, my kindness ? Viper ! Viper ! "

" What is the good of reviling me, Tsarevitch ? I will do as I say."

He was awed ; even his anger went, he grew weak and faint, sank into a chair at her side, took her hand and trying to look into her eyes, said :—

" Afrossinia my love, what does all this mean ? Good heavens ! is this a time for us two to quarrel ? Why should you speak like this ? I know you won't do it ; I know you won't forsake me in my distress ; or if you have no pity for me at least think of the little one."

She neither answered, nor looked, nor even moved, but remained passive, like a dead thing.

" Or don't you love me ? " he continued, with mad, entreating caress, the pathetic cunning of a lover. " Well, if it is so, then leave me. God be with you ! I won't keep you back, only say you don't love me."

She suddenly started up and looked at him with a jeering smile which almost made his heart stand still.

" And you thought I loved you ? When you made game of me, a foolish girl, used her with violence, threatened her with a knife, then was the time to ask whether I loved you or not ! "

" Afrossinia, what *is* the matter with you ? Don't you trust me ? I will marry you and cover up the sin by wedlock. I look upon you now already as my wife."

" I thank your lordship for his gracious favour ! a favour indeed ! The Tsarevitch condescends to marry a serf-girl ! And yet look at her, the fool is not glad of the honour ! I have endured it all these years ; I can no longer. Marry you ! I would as soon be hanged or drowned. I would you had straight away killed me that time. ' You shall be Tsaritsa,'—is that your allurements ? Maybe my maiden honour and freedom are more to me than your kingdom ! At court you live like wolves, each ready to devour the other. Your father is the old wolf, you are the young one ; the old one will swallow the young one in the end. How can you stand against him ? The Tsar did wisely when he took the inheritance from you. How can you govern ? Go and be a monk, and pray for your sins, you hypocrite ! You killed your wife, neglected your children, so entangled yourself with a woman that you can't leave her. You have become feeble, hopelessly feeble, wearied out, degenerate. Look at your self now, when a woman insults you, you remain silent, afraid to say a word. Eh, my fine fellow ! I cudgel you like a dog, and then just sign to you, whistle to you, and you will be again after me, tongue hanging out, like a dog after a bitch ; and yet he asks me for *love* ! Is it possible to love a cur like you ? "

He started, unable to recognise her. Her pale face, lit up with an almost insufferable brightness in an aureole of fiery-red hair, was terrible, yet more beautiful than ever. The witch ! he thought. All at once she seemed the cause of all the storm outside her, The wild shrieking of the storm was but an echo to her words.

" Wait a little, you will see how I love you ! I will repay you ! I would rather die myself than shield you. I will tell your father how you asked the Emperor for an army to make war on him ; how you rejoiced at the mutiny in the army, and planned to side with the rebels, how you even wished your father's death, you villain ! I will report everything, you won't be able to get out of it ! The Tsar will torture you, flog you to death, and I shall be looking on and asking : ' Well, dear Alexis ! will you remember Afrossinia's love ? ' And as for your brat, the moment he is born I will with my own hands——"

He closed his eyes, stopped his ears, he wanted neither

to see nor to hear. It seemed to him that all was falling, was breaking down, and that he himself was sinking with it. In a flash he realised, as he had never done before, that there remained no hope for him, and that, struggle as he might, do what he would, he was irrevocably doomed.

When the Tsarevitch opened his eyes Afrossinia had left the room, but a streak of light came through the bedroom door. He guessed she was there, and he went in to see.

She was hurriedly packing, tying things in a shawl as though preparing to leave him at once. The bundle was quite small—a few underclothes, two or three simple dresses which she had made herself, and the only too familiar box with a broken lock, and on the lid a bird—now nearly peeled off—picking a bunch of grapes; it was the same box in which she used to lay her marriage outfit while a serf-girl at Viasemski's house. The expensive dresses and other things which he had given her she carefully put to one side, probably not wanting to take his presents. This hurt him more than all her cruel words. When she had finished packing she sat down at her little table, mended a quill and began to write, slowly, with difficulty printing each letter. He approached on tip-toe, stooped, and looking over her shoulder, read the first lines :

"Alexander Ivanovitch [that was Roumiantzev]. Since the Tsarevitch wants to go to the Pope, and not only does not heed but is even exceedingly angry with me for trying to dissuade him from going, please send for me as soon as you can, or rather come yourself, for fear he should carry me away by force, because he will go nowhere without me."

A board creaked, Afrossinia turned round, shrieked, jumped up. They stood facing one another, speechless, motionless, and staring at one another with the same look as at the time he threatened her with the knife.

"So it is to him, then?" he gasped in a low hoarse voice.

A scarcely perceptible smile of irony flitted across her slightly pallid lips.

"I will do just as I like. I am not going to ask you where I am to go."

His face became contorted, with one hand he gripped her throat, with the other her hair, then throwing her down he began to beat, drag her along and kick her.

"You vile creature!"

The thin short dagger she used to wear when disguised as a page, with which she had just cut a sheet for her letter, lay shining on the table. The Tsarevitch caught hold of it and raised his arm. He felt a mad joy, as on the day when he had done her violence. He realized that she had always deceived him, that she had never belonged to him, not even in their most passionate moments, and that only now, only in killing her, would he entirely possess her, and satisfy his implacable desire. She neither shrieked, nor called for help, but struggled silently, adroitly, as supple and nimble as a cat. During the struggle he knocked the table on which the candle was standing: it upset and the candle falling to the ground went out. Darkness ensued. Fiery circles danced before his eyes. The voices of the storm began howling, somewhere quite close to him, almost in his ear, and then burst into infernal laughter. He started, as if recovering from a trance, and, at the same time, he felt her hanging on his arm, motionless, apparently dead. He loosened the hand with which he had grasped her hair, her body fell to the ground with a short, lifeless, dull thud.

Such fear seized him that his hair stood on end. He flung the short dagger far from him, rushed into the next room, seized the chandelier with the half-burnt candles, hurried back to the bedroom, and then saw her lying on the floor prostrate, pale, with blood on her forehead, her eyes closed. He was again going to rush out and call for help, when it seemed to him that she was breathing. He fell on his knees and bent over her, put his arms round her and carefully lifted her on the bed. Then he lost all control over himself, and was no longer conscious of what he was doing. He now gave her some spirits to smell, now he tried to find a feather, remembering that burnt feathers restore people to consciousness, now bathed her head carefully with water, sobbing and kissing her hands and feet and dress; he called to her and knocked his head against the bed corner, and tore his hair.

"I have killed her—killed her,—killed her! accursed that I am."

Now he again prayed.

"Lord Jesus, Blessed Virgin—take my life for her life!"

And his heart began to beat in such an agony of dread that he imagined he was dying.

Suddenly he noticed that she opened her eyes and looked at him with a curious smile.

"Afrossinia! Afrossinia! How are you? Shall I send for a doctor?"

She continued to look at him with the same silent, mysterious smile.

She made an effort to raise herself, he helped her and felt that she had put her arms round his neck, and was pressing her cheek close to his with a childlike fondness quite new to him.

"You got frightened, thought you had finished me, eh? Nonsense! it is not quite so easy to kill a woman. We are like cats, with nine lives. A lover's blow does no harm."

"Forgive me, forgive me, Afrossinia!"

She looked into his eyes, smiled, and fondled his hair with the tenderness of a mother.

"Ah, my boy, my foolish little boy! Now I come to look at you, you are quite a little boy. You know and understand none of us women. Ah, you foolish boy, you really thought that I did not love you. Come, let me whisper a word into your ear."

She brought her lips close to his ear and whispered passionately:

"I love you, love you as my own soul, my life, my joy, how can I live on earth apart from you? Rather would I see my soul parted from my body. Do you believe me now?"

"I believe you, I believe you!" he cried, and laughed for joy.

She nestled closer to him.

"My light, Alexis, why do I love you so much? Where your thoughts are there are mine also, your word is my word, your will is mine. You are my master. This is my sorrow, that we women are all foolish and wicked, and that I exceed them all. God gave me a hungry grasping heart. I see you love me, but that does not satisfy me; what more I want I cannot tell. Why is my boy, I think, always so gentle and quiet, never contradicting, never saying a cross word, never admonishing me, stupid me? I never feel

his hand upon me, nor his anger. It is not an empty saying that 'they strike most who love most.' Or is it because he does not love me? Let me make him angry; let me test him and see what he will do then? And this is what you are, you almost killed me. Just like your father. I nearly died of fear. Well, this will be a lesson for the future, I will remember it and love you, this is how I'll love you, deep, deep——"

It was to him as if he saw for the first time those eyes kindled with a terrible dim fire, those parted, hungry lips, and for the first time felt this elusive, snake-like body. "Then this is her true self," he thought, in blissful amazement.

"And you thought I could not caress?" and she laughed with a quiet laugh which seemed to set all his blood on fire. "Wait, and you'll see how I can love! only satisfy my foolish heart, do what I ask you, then I shall know that you love me as I love you—unto death. My life, my dearest darling, will you do it?"

"I will do anything you ask. God knows there is nothing in the world I would not do. I'll even meet certain death if you wish it."

She did not whisper, but only breathed:—

"Return to your father."

And again his heart sank in terror. The iron hand of his father seemed to stretch out and grip him from under this loving hand. "She lies," the thought flashed across his mind with the swiftness of lightning.

"Well! let her lie, so long as she caresses me thus," he concluded recklessly.

"I am sick, sick unto death of living with you in lawlessness. I don't want to be a lost woman. I want to be your wedded wife before God and man. You may tell me I am as good as your wife now. Idle talk! What sort of a wife am I? Our boy, too, will be born a bastard. But as soon as you return to your father we can marry. Tolstoi himself says, 'Let the Tsarevitch propose, as the condition of his return, that he may be allowed to marry.' And the Tsar, he says, will be only too glad; all that will be expected from the Tsarevitch is the abdication of the throne and his retirement to the country. To marry a serf-girl means the

same as going to a monastery ; he will forfeit the crown. And this is all I want, my Alexis. I am afraid of the Tsardom, more than of anything else. When a Tsar you won't have any time left for me. Your head will be turned. Tsars have no time for love. I don't want to be a neglected Tsaritsa, I want to be your sweetheart always. Love is my kingdom. We will settle down in the country, in some village, either in Poretzkoye or Roshdestveno, and there we will live in peace and quiet, you and I and the boy, untroubled by anything. My heart, my life, my joy ! Don't you want it ? Won't you do it ? Is it the throne you regret ? ”

“ Why should you ask, Afrossinia, little mother ? You know well I'll do it.”

“ You'll return to your father ? ”

“ I will.”

It seemed to them that the opposite of what had just happened, was going on now. No longer he, but she had the violent mastery. Her kisses were wounds ; her caresses a murder.

She grew still, and, gently pushing him away, again breathed, in a scarcely audible whisper :—

“ Swear it ! ”

He wavered, like a man on the brink of committing suicide, when the knife is already raised. Nevertheless he said—

“ I swear, before God.”

She blew out the candle and embraced him with endless love, deep, terrible as death. It seemed to him he was flying with her, a witch, a white sorceress, towards some bottomless gloom, borne on the wings of the storm.

He knew it was his doom, the end of everything, and he rejoiced in it.

CHAPTER VII

THE next day, October 3rd, Tolstoi was writing a letter to the Tsar in Petersburg:

“ MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,—

“ We have to humbly report, that your Majesty’s son, his Highness the Tsarevitch Alexis, has declared unto us this day his intention. Putting aside all former resistance, he submits to your Majesty’s decree, and is coming to Petersburg with us. About this he has himself written to your Majesty, and has given us his letter unsealed, so that we may include it in our packet. Herewith we send a copy of the aforesaid letter, the original we are keeping back, deeming it wiser under present circumstances. He lays down in it two conditions—first, to be allowed to live on his estate near Petersburg, and the second—permission to marry the girl who now lives with him. When we tried at first to persuade him to return to your Majesty, he would not even so much as consider it without these conditions being granted. He is very anxious, your Majesty, that we should obtain permission for him to wed the woman before reaching Petersburg. And though these conditions are rather tiresome, yet I take the liberty of granting them of my own accord, without waiting for your decree. I herewith lay before your Majesty my own humble opinion on this subject. If there is no special reason against it let him have his way, for then only, will he show to the world what sort of a man he is; that no real grievance had prompted his flight, only the woman. Secondly, it will so annoy the Emperor that he will never believe in him again. Thirdly, the danger of a suitable marriage will be warded off; a risk which threatens us even here. And should you sanction all this, please deign to mention this to me in your letter,

along with other commands, so that I could show it to him without leaving it with him. And should your Majesty consider that this marriage is not permissible, why not just give him hope by telling him that it cannot take place in any other country save Russia, so that, filled with hope, he may not think of delay, but come to you without the least suspicion. And also, my lord, deign for a little while, at least, to keep your son's return a secret; lest once it gets abroad, those who are opposed to his return should tempt him to change his mind, which may God forbid. Also, condescend to send me a decree to all the commanders of regiments stationed along our route, in case we may need a convoy. We hope to leave Naples on the 6th or 7th of October. The Tsarevitch desires first to visit Bari to see the relics of St. Nicholas, whither we will accompany him. At the same time, the mountain roads are very bad, and though we should travel without delay, yet it will be impossible to hurry. Besides, the aforesaid woman is four or five months advanced in pregnancy, and this too might lengthen the time of our journey, because he will not travel fast out of consideration for her; it is impossible to describe how he loves her and with what solicitude he watches over her.

"We remain your Majesty's most humble and respectful servant,

"PETER TOLSTOI.

"P.S.—When God shall grant me to be back in Petersburg, then, your Majesty, I shall safely praise Italy without running the risk of the penalty of the Large Goblet, since a real campaign was not even needed; but your intention of coming to Italy alone proved sufficient to yield good results to your Majesty and the entire Russian Empire."

He also wrote to the Resident in Vienna, Vesselóvsky:

"Keep everything absolutely secret for fear some devil should write to the Tsarevitch and frighten him off this journey. God alone knows the difficulties which have arisen over this affair. I cannot tell you all the miracles we have accomplished."

It was night and Tolstoi was alone in his apartments at the Three Kings Hotel, sitting with a candle at his writing-table.

Having finished his letter to the Tsar, and made a copy of the Tsarevitch's letter, he took the sealing wax to seal them up in the same envelope. But he put it down again, then read once more the original of the Tsarevitch's letter, sighed deeply, joyfully, opened his golden snuff-box, took a pinch, and rubbing the snuff between his finger and thumb, with a quiet smile fell into a reverie.

He could scarcely trust his luck; only this morning he was in the depths of despair, so that on receiving a note from the Tsarevitch: "I wish urgently to speak with you—something to your interest," he did not want to go, thinking it only meant more talking to while away the time.

And suddenly, the "cursed stubbornness" had disappeared; he had agreed to everything; in very truth a miracle, due to none save God and St. Nicholas. It was not in vain that Tolstoi had always specially honoured St. Nicholas, and trusted to the holy protection of the wonder worker. He was glad to accompany the Tsarevitch to Bari. The holy man well deserved a candle! It is true that besides St. Nicholas, Venus also had her part, Venus whom he so fervently worshipped had not abandoned him—rather helped him. To-day, when saying goodbye he had kissed the woman's hand—only the hand—why, he had felt equal to falling down before her on his knees and worshipping her, like Venus herself. A clever lass! How she tricked the Tsarevitch? For after all, he was not so great a fool as not to realize what was before him. That's just the trouble, he is too clever. "It is a general rule," Tolstoi was in the habit of saying, "that clever people are easily cheated, because while they have a lot of extraordinary knowledge, they have but slight acquaintance with every-day concerns. To fathom the mind and nature of man requires great knowledge; it is more difficult to know people than to remember a number of books."

With what reckless ease, with what a cheerful face, did the Tsarevitch inform him to-day that he was returning to his father. He seemed either drunk or dreaming; the whole time he was laughing with a strange pathetic laugh.

"Poor man! poor man!" Tolstoi shook his head in distress and having snuffed, he wiped a tear which had come

into his eye ; whether owing to the snuff, or his pity for the Tsarevitch is doubtful. " Like a sheep which is dumb, he is brought to the slaughter."

Tolstoi had a kind, almost sentimental heart.

" Yes, it seems a great pity, yet it could not be helped," he hastened to console himself. " The eel lives in the sea to prevent the carp from sleeping. Friendship is friendship, duty is duty."

He, Tolstoi, had, after all, succeeded in rendering a service to the Tsar, to the Fatherland ; he had kept up his dignity, had proved himself a worthy disciple of Niccolo Machiavelli, and had successfully crowned his career. Now his lucky star will descend on his bosom in the shape of St. Andrew's decoration, the Tolstoi's will be Counts, and should they attain celebrity in future generations, reach higher positions, they will remember him. Let now Thy servant depart in peace, O Lord !

These thoughts had filled his heart with an almost frolicsome mirth. He suddenly felt young again, forty years seemed to have dropped off his shoulders, he felt a desire to whirl round and round, as if, like the god Mercury, he had wings on his feet and hands.

He was holding the sealing wax over the candle, the flame trembled, and the huge shadow of a smooth skull—he had taken his wig off—was bobbing on the wall as in a dance, and making awful faces, laughing like a dead skull. The sealing wax melted, thick drops, red as blood, began to fall. He was gently humming his favourite song :

'Tis time to cast thy bow away,
Cupid, we all are in your sway !
Thy golden love-awaking dart
Has reached and wounded every heart.

In the letter Tolstoi was sending to the Tsar the Tsarevitch had written :—

" Most gracious Sovereign and father !

" Your gracious letter was delivered to me by Messieurs Tolstoi and Roumiantzev. From it as well as from their words, I, who, by my presumptuous flight, made myself unworthy of all grace, have been informed of your Majesty's

gracious pardon, assured to me in case of my return, for which I tender you my heartfelt thanks, and humbly pray to be forgiven my manifold transgressions, which I fully realize deserve severe punishment. And trusting to your gracious promise, I give myself into your hands, and will leave Naples together with your envoys in a few days, for Petersburg.

“Your lowliest servant, no more worthy to be called your
sop.

“ALEXIS.”

Book VII

PETER THE GREAT

CHAPTER I

PETER had got up early. "The very devils haven't had time to snore," grumbled the sleepy orderly who had to light the stoves. A gloomy November morning was looking in through the window. By the light of a tallow candle end, in a night cap, dressing gown, and craftsman's leather apron, the Tsar was sitting at his lathe turning a candelabrum of ivory for the Church of St. Peter and Paul, in gratitude for the benefit he had derived from the Martial water during his illness. Then he started carving out of birch-wood a little Bacchus with grapes for the lid of a goblet. He worked with as much zeal as if his livelihood depended upon it.

At 4.30 a.m. in came his private secretary, Makaroff. The Tsar took his place at a walnut-wood desk—so high that the chin of a man of medium height was but level with it, and began to dictate decrees to the different Colleges or Departments, which were being established in Russia on the advice of Leibnitz, "following the example and precedent of other civilised Empires."

"As in a clock, one wheel sets the other in motion," said the philosopher to the Tsar, "so in the great administrative machine one college ought to work another, and if everything is harmoniously organised in exact proportions, then the hands of the state clock will invariably point to happy hours for your whole country."

Peter loved mechanics, and the thought of converting the government into a machine delighted him. Yet what seemed so simple in theory, proved far otherwise in practice.

The Russian people neither understood nor liked the idea of colleges, and mockingly called them "kaleki," which means cripples. The Tsar had invited learned foreigners "versed in law." They worked through the medium of interpreters. This however did not answer. Young Russian clerks were then despatched to Königsberg, "to learn the German language and thereby facilitate the working of the Colleges," and supervisors were sent with them to prevent them from idling. But the supervisors idled with the supervised. The Tsar published a decree: "All colleges are obliged to draw up regulations for their work on the Swedish model. If some of the points in the Swedish regulation are inapplicable, or are unsuited to the conditions of this Empire, the same should be altered at discretion." But judgment was sadly lacking, and the Tsar felt the new institutions would prove as inefficient as the old ones. "It is all in vain," he thought, "until the direct good, the supreme patriotic interests of the Empire is realised—a thing that can't be expected for another hundred years, at least."

The orderly announced a Foreign Office translator, Koslovsky. A young man came in, haggard, pale and consumptive-looking. Peter rummaged among his papers and gave to him a manuscript corrected and marked with pencil notes on the margin; it was a treatise on mechanics.

"It is badly translated. It must be done over again!"

"Your Majesty," stuttered Koslovsky in fear and trembling, "the author himself has written the book in very involved language. More mindful of the subtlety of his philosophical style than of the benefit people could derive from the book, he is abbreviated and abstruse. For my part with my dull brain I cannot possibly follow him."

The Tsar patiently instructed.

"There is no need to translate literally, but, having ascertained the meaning clothe it in language which can best convey it, employing only what is necessary for presenting the main ideas. To try and retain the style is not

necessary. Your matter should be useful and not written for effect, without any superfluous words which only waste time and distract the reader's attention. Avoid the high-flown Slavonic style, and write the plain Russian speech. Do not use high sounding words but the language of the Foreign Office. Write as you speak, simply. Do you understand me ? ”

“ Quite so, your Majesty,” answered the translator, with the precision of a soldier, yet he hung his head with as melancholy an air as if he remembered the fate of his predecessor Boris Wolkoff, also a translator to the Foreign Office, who in despair over a French book on gardening, ‘Le jardin de Quintiny,’ and afraid of the Tsar’s wrath, opened his veins, and perished.

“ Well go, God be with you ! Put all your heart in the work ! And also tell Avrámoff that the type in the new books is fatter and not so clean as in the older ones. The types of letters B. and P. must be altered, they are too broad. The binding also is defective, especially as he binds the pages together too tightly ; the books won’t close. He should sew them at the hinges more loosely and give them more space at the back.”

When Koslovsky left him, Peter remembered the dreams of Leibnitz about a general Russian Encyclopedia—the quintessence of sciences, such as was not yet in existence ; a Petersburg Academy, the college of learned administrators with the Tsar at their head ; a future Russia, which having surpassed Europe in knowledge, would act as lighthouse of the world.

“ That bread will be long in baking,” thought Peter with a bitter smile. “ Before we can begin to teach Europe we must ourselves learn to speak Russian, write, print, bind and make paper.”

He dictated an ukase :—

“ In all towns and villages all bits of rags and linen should be carefully collected and sent to the chief office in Petersburg, where fourpence per pood will be paid for them.”

These rags were intended for the paper factories.

Then followed the ukase about the melting of fat, the right way of plaiting bast shoes, and the dressing of hides for boot leather : “ Inasmuch as the hide commonly used

for shoe leather is exceedingly unfit for wear, being dressed with tar, which does not prevent it from rotting, nor from letting water in in damp weather, it would be more expedient to dress the same with train oil."

He glanced at his slate, which, together with a piece of pencil, hung at the head of his bed; he used to note on it any thought which occurred to him during the night. That night he had jotted down:

"Where should manure be deposited? Don't forget Persia—mats."

He made Makaroff read out the ambassador Volinsky's letter concerning Persia.

"The present monarch here is such a fool that it would be difficult to find his equal even among simple peasant folk, much less among the crowned heads. His power will not last long. Although our present war with the Swedes may hinder us, yet, nevertheless, seeing the feeble resources of this country as I do, I deem it possible to annex a major part of Persia simply with a small force. There could not possibly be a more favourable time than the present."

In his answer to Volinsky, Peter ordered him to send merchants down the river Amu-Daria in order to discover a water way to India, and to draw a map describing it. At the same time to prepare a letter to the Grand Mogul—the Dalai Lama of Tibet. (A road to India, an alliance between Europe and Asia, was an old dream of Peter's.)

Some twenty years ago, a Russian church had been erected in Peking, in honour of St. Sophia—the Wisdom of God.

"Le Czar peut unir la Chine à l'Europe," prophesied Leibnitz. "The Tsar's conquests in Persia will lay the foundation of an Empire greater than that of the Romans," the foreign diplomats warned their sovereigns. "The Tsar, like another Alexander, strives to conquer the world," said the Sultan.

Peter reached down from a shelf, and unfolded a map of the globe which he had once drawn himself while musing on Russia's destiny. With the words Europe on the west, Asia towards the south, and on the space between the headland Tchoukotsk, and the Niemen and across from Archangel down to Astrakhan the word RUSSIA appeared

in the same sized letters as EUROPE and ASIA. "They are all mistaken in calling Russia 'an Empire'; it is half the world."

But the next moment, with his usual ductile will power, he turned sharply from musings to business, from the grandiose to the petty. He began to dictate ukases as to a fit place for the deposit of manure; on the substitution of hair sacks for sacks of matting in which to carry biscuits to the galleys; and barrels, or linen bags, for grain and salt, "mats should on no account be used"; on the saving of lead bullets used at practice-firing; the preservation of forests; "the prohibition of hollowed-out trunks for coffins", which were to be made of planks. N. B.—England to be written to for a model."

Then he turned over the pages of his notebook to ascertain whether anything of importance had been forgotten. The first page bore the inscription: "In Gottes Namen"—"In the Lord's name." Then followed various notes and memoranda: sometimes two and three words indicated a long train of thought—

"Of a certain discovery which will help to find out various mysteries in nature."

"Clever experiments: how to extinguish earth oil with vitriol." "How to boil hemp in saltpetre water." "Buy the secret of making German sausages."

"Draw up a concise catechism for the peasants, and have it read in churches for their instruction."

"Exposed foundling infants are to be educated."

"Whaling to be organised."

"The fall of the Greek Monarchy was caused by contempt of warfare."

"Order French Gazettes to be sent."

"Engage foreign comedians at high pay".

"Russian proverbs. A Russian lexicon."

"Chemical secrets for testing ore."

"If it be true that laws of nature are rational, why then do animals devour one another? and why do we cause them so much suffering?"

"Present and past judgments against atheists."

"Compose a prayer for the soldiers: Great, eternal, Holy God, etc."

The journal of Peter recalled the diary of Leonardo da Vinci.

At six in the morning he began to dress. Pulling on his stockings he noticed a hole ; he sat down, got a needle and a ball of wool, and began darning. Ruminating about a road to India in the footsteps of Alexander of Macedonia, he darned his stockings.

Then he had some anisette brandy, with a cracknel ; lit his pipe ; went out of the palace, and drove in a cabriolet with a lantern (for it was yet dark) to the Admiralty.

CHAPTER II

THE Admiralty pinnacle glowed dimly through the fog, reflecting the flames of fifteen dockyard furnaces. Out of the gloom there rose the black outline of a monstrous skeleton ; the hull of a new ship. Cables lay coiled like gigantic serpents. Pulleys squeaked, hammers sounded, iron rattled, pitch was boiling. In the red glare men flitted to and fro like shadows. The dockyard resembled the forges of hell.

Peter went hither, thither, inspecting everything.

He verified in the gun department the entry of the calibre of cast cannon balls and shells which were piled in pyramids, under shelter—to prevent the rust eating them ; whether the flint locks and barrels of the muskets had been filled with fat ; whether the ukase concerning cannon had been carried out : “ It must be ascertained with the help of a mirror whether the inside of the barrel was quite smooth, or whether the handles to the muzzle had formed flaws and bulgings ; should any such flaws have occurred their depth must be measured.”

He could tell by the smell the different qualities of walrus fat ; tested by handling the weight of sailcloth, and whether its lightness were due to the fine texture, or to flimsiness. He talked with the foremen as to equals.

“ The boards must be planed to fit tightly. Choose well-seasoned wood ; for should it be caulked before it is quite dry, then it will not only shrink, but also bulge out in the water and compress the caulk.”

* * * * *

“ The oak should be young ; with a bluish, and never a reddish hue. Made of such oak, the vessel will be as hard

as iron, even a bullet could not pierce it further than two inches."

In the hemp stores, he took handfuls from the bales, and, holding the hemp between his knees, carefully examined, shook and tested it like an expert. "Ship cables for mooring are of great consequence; they ought to be made of the very best and strongest hemp. When the cable is trustworthy, the vessel is safe; if faulty, vessel and crew are doomed." On all sides the Tsar was heard rating the agents and contractors:—

"I see that during my absence the work has gone side-long, like a crab, at snail's speed."

"I shall be obliged to bring you to order by demanding from you extra work, and by a merciless infliction of corporal punishment."

"Just wait a bit, I will give you a keepsake, which you won't forget till next spring!"

He cut short lengthy speeches. One day, when a distinguished foreigner elaborated some unessential detail, he spat in his face, reviled him obscenely, and turned away.

To a clerk who cheated, he remarked: "I will score on your back the figures you failed to put on paper."

To a petition for raising the stipend of the Admiralty Councillors, he answered:—

"Nonsense! they are more anxious to fill their pockets than to render good service."

When he learnt that several of the vessels belonging to the galley-fleet had been supplied with rotten salt beef, so that the soldiers during five weeks had to content themselves with stale smelts and water, which caused 1,000 men to fall ill, and be unfit for work, his anger passed all bounds. He almost struck an old captain who had distinguished himself in the Yarquut engagement.

"Should you do such an idiotic thing again, don't lament being dishonoured in your old age! Why should such important business, a thousand times more valuable than your head, be transacted with such carelessness? Probably you seldom read the Military Regulations. The officers of the galleys in question will be hanged, and you almost deserve as much for your gross neglect." But he dropped his raised hand and mastered his wrath.

"I should never have expected this from you," he added in an undertone ; but such rebuke was in his tone that the guilty one would have preferred a blow.

"Now take care," said Peter, "that such cruelty shall not recur ; for in God's sight it is the greatest of sins. I have recently heard that here in the Petersburg dock-yards, last year, the working men were utterly neglected, especially the sick, and that even dead bodies were allowed to remain lying about the streets, which is revolting not only to Christians, but even to barbarians. I cannot understand this lack of compassion. They are not cattle but Christian souls, for which we shall have to answer before God."

CHAPTER III

PETER drove in his cabriolet along the quay to the Summer Palace, where he was staying that year until late autumn, owing to alterations which were going on in the Winter Palace.

He was wondering why, in the olden days, he used to delight at going home to dinner and meeting his wife, while now it seemed almost burdensome. He remembered anonymous letters full of hints with regard to his wife and the handsome young German, the gentleman in waiting, the Kammer-junker Mons.

Catherine had always been a faithful wife and true help-mate. She had shared all his toils and dangers; she had followed him in his campaigns like a common soldier's wife. During the Pruth campaign, acting in a truly manly way, she saved the whole army. He called her his mother. When without her he felt helpless, and complained as a child:—

“Mother, there is no one to wash clothes and mend for me.”

They used to feign jealousy of one another for fun.

“On reading your letter, I felt a thinking profoundly. You write bidding me not to hurry home, for the sake of the cure; but it is more likely you have found somebody else a little younger than myself. Please write and tell me whether it is one of our own, or a foreigner. That is how you women treat us poor old men!”

“I don't accept the term, old man,” she replied; “it's all nonsense to call yourself one. I am sure that so dear an old man will easily find some one to love him! Is that what you think of me? Well! I too have heard that the Swedish queen is in love with you. I have my suspicions!”

When they were separated they were wont to exchange gifts like affianced lovers. Catherine would send to him at a distance of a thousand miles, Hungarian wine, strong vodka, freshly salted cucumbers, lemons, oranges, because—"our own will be more agreeable to you. I hope they will do you much good."

But the presents he most delighted in were children. With the exception of the two elder ones, Lisa and Anne, they came, however, into the world puny things, and soon died. Most of all he loved the last born, Peter, "The Master of Petersburg," who had been proclaimed heir to the throne in Alexis' stead. Peter, too, was a sickly child, always ailing, and only kept alive by medicine. The Tsar was in continual dread of losing him. Catherine used to comfort the Tsar, saying: "I dare say if our dear old man were here, we might have another Peterkin before the year is over."

There was a certain affectation of sentiment mingled with this conjugal tenderness, the sentimentality of a gallant, quite unexpected in a fierce Tsar.

"I have had my hair cut here, and though it may not be a very pleasing gift, yet herewith I enclose a lock."

"I have received your beloved hair and am glad to learn you are well."—"I am sending you, my sweetheart! a flower and a sprig of mint which you yourself have planted. I am glad to say all goes well here, only it feels so lonely without you in the garden." This he wrote from Revel, from her favourite garden, Catherinenthal. The letter contained a withered blue flower, mint, and a cutting from an English newspaper: "Last year on the eleventh of October, there arrived in England from the county of Monmouth two people who had lived in wedlock one hundred and ten years, the man was one hundred and twenty-six years old, and the woman one hundred and twenty-five." As much as to say: "May God grant us as long a time in the happy state of matrimony!"

And now, on the verge of old age, on this melancholy autumn morning, he mused over the life they had lived together. At the idea that Catherine might perchance be false to him, and exchange her "old man" for the first-come handsome boy, some German of base origin, he felt

neither jealousy, nor anger, nor indignation, only the helplessness of a child forsaken by his mother.

He gave the reins to his orderly, and, sinking back, hung his head. The jolting of the carriage over the uneven road made his head shake, as if from old age, and his whole figure suggested age and decrepitude.

The clock beyond the Neva struck eleven. But the morning light as yet only suggested the lurid look of a dying man. It seemed day would never break. Snow mingled with rain. The horse's hoofs splashed sonorously through the puddles, the wheels scattering mud.

Long trains of grey clouds were creeping slowly like fat-bellied spiders across the skies, so low that they completely shrouded the pinnacle on the Peter and Paul fortress; grey water, grey houses, trees and human beings, all losing their precision in mist, seemed but dull phantoms.

When Peter reached the wooden drawbridge across the Swan Channel there came from the Summer Garden a mortuary smell of earth and damp rotten leafage, which the gardeners were sweeping into heaps along the avenues. Rooks were cawing in the bare lime-trees. The clang of hammers was heard: men were busily engaged in nailing narrow long boxes over the marble statues to protect them from the winter's snow and frost. It seemed as if the risen gods were again buried, nailed up in coffins.

Through the dark, lilac-hued, wet stems gleamed the bright yellow walls of a Dutch house, many-windowed, and with glazed doors opening on the garden; with its iron checkered roof, a weathercock in the shape of St. George the Dragonslayer, and white stucco bas-reliefs depicting sea monsters, Tritons and Nereides.

This was the Summer Palace.

CHAPTER IV

THERE was a smell of sour cabbage soup in the palace. This soup was being cooked for the imperial dinner. Peter liked it ; he preferred the simple dishes of the soldiers.

The Tsar disliked spending much time at meals ; the dishes were served in rapid succession through a window straight from the kitchen. The latter was neat, tiled, and its walls hung with bright copper pans—as in old Dutch houses.

Besides the soup the dinner consisted of buckwheat, Flensbourg oysters, brawn, sprats, roasted meat, with cucumbers and pickled lemons, ducks' feet in sour sauce. After dinner, nuts, apples and Limbourg cheese were brought in. For drinks kvas, and French red wine. One servant only waited at table.

As usual, guests were invited to dinner : James Bruce, the Court physician, Blumentrost, an English captain, the Kammer-junker Mons, and Miss Hamilton, lady-in-waiting. Peter had invited Mons as a surprise for Catherine ; and when she heard of it, she, in her turn, invited the court lady Hamilton. Perhaps she did it to suggest to her husband that she was not quite ignorant of his mistresses. It was that same Hamilton, a Scotchwoman by birth, proud, pure, cold as a marble Diana to look at, whose name had been whispered, when in the Summer Garden the body of an infant, wrapt in a napkin belonging to the palace, had been found in the water pipe of a fountain. At table she remained silent ; her pale face seemed bloodless.

Conversation flagged, notwithstanding Catherine's efforts to keep it going.

She related a dream she had had—a savage white-furred animal with a crown on its head bearing three lighted candles, repeatedly roared at her.

Peter was fond of dreams, and would often at night note them down on his slate. He, too, related his dream : Water everywhere ; manœuvres at sea ; vessels, and galleys ; he had noticed in his dream that the sails and masts were out of proportion.

“ Ah, little father,” Catherine fondly exclaimed “ you are continually worrying about the ships ; even sleep brings you no peace.”

And when he lapsed into sullen silence she began to talk about the new ships. “ The *Neptune* is an exceedingly fine vessel and sails so well, that it is really the flower of the fleet. The *Gangut* also goes well and obeys her rudder ; only she is not rigid enough for her height, and the slightest breeze causes her to slope more than any of the others. What will happen to her in stormy weather ? I have delayed the launching of the large sloop, made by Von Renne, until your arrival ; and to prevent it warping had it covered with boards.”

She spoke about the ships like a mother of her children : “ The *Gangut* and the *Lesnoy* are like twin sisters, unhappy apart from one another. Now that they lie together it is a pleasure to see them. The name ‘ adopted ’ suits well the purchased vessels as compared with ours ; for they can as little be mistaken for ours as a father confounds his own child with an adopted one.”

Peter answered reluctantly, as though preoccupied. He was stealthily watching her and Mons, whose smooth, immovable face, as if it were cut out of some pink stone, his blue turquoise eyes, gave the Kammer-junker the appearance of a porcelain doll.

Catherine felt that her husband was watching them, yet she controlled herself perfectly ; even if she knew of any charge against her, she manifested no alarm. Only her eyes, when looking at her husband, expressed more insinuating tenderness than usual ; and, perhaps, she talked a little too much, passing on quickly from subject to subject, as if trying to distract her husband. It might have dawned upon him that she was striving to charm away his suspicions.

She had hardly ended about the ships before she began about the children ; Elizabeth and Anne who had narrowly escaped being disfigured by smallpox this summer ; the

little Peter, whose health had grown worse with his last tooth.

"Still he is gradually picking up again ; already he has cut five teeth ; only now his right eye gives him trouble."

Peter brightened up for a moment and began to question Blumentrost about his boy's health.

"The eye is getting better, sir," the doctor replied, "and a new tooth has appeared in the lower jaw. To-day he is rubbing his gums further back with his little fingers ; that means the molars will soon be coming."

"He will be a brave general," added Catherine ; "he delights in playing at soldiers, and his great joy is to watch the soldiers exercise and hear the guns go off. All he can say is 'papa,' 'mamma,' 'soldier.' I need your protection, father, he is always quarrelling with me when you are away. He does not like to be told that his father has gone, and he rejoices when I tell him that papa has come." She smiled sweetly at her husband.

Peter did not reply. But the look he gave her and Mons made every one feel uneasy. Catherine cast her eyes down and slightly paled. Hamilton raised her eyes, and a mocking smile curved her lips. Silence ensued. All were alarmed.

Peter, as though nothing had happened, turned to James Bruce and began to talk with him about astronomy, Newton's system, the spots on the sun which can be looked at through a telescope, if the glass next to the eye be smoked, and the forthcoming solar eclipse. He was so engrossed in this conversation that he noticed nothing else to the very end of the meal. Before leaving the table he pulled out his diary and noted down :

"Mem :—To inform the people about the forthcoming solar eclipses in order to prevent them being regarded as miraculous ; since that which is foretold ceases to be a miracle. Nobody should be allowed to invent and spread false rumours about supposed miracles, which serves no purpose except to upset people."

All breathed more freely when Peter rose from the table and went into the next room.

He sat down in an arm-chair close to the fire, put on his round, iron-rimmed spectacles, lit his pipe, and began to

look through the new Dutch papers, marking on the margin what was to be translated for the Russian newspapers.

Then he made another note in his diary :

" Publish everything in full : both good and bad news ; nothing should be concealed."

A pale sunbeam escaped from behind the clouds ; it was timid, feeble, like the smile of a dying man. A luminous square spread from the window across the floor to the fireplace ; the red flame paled, and grew transparent. Outside the branches stood sharply outlined against the clear silvery sky. An orange-tree grown in a barrel, which was generally carried from one hothouse to another, being delicate and sensitive to cold, rejoiced to see the sun, and its fruit glowed among the dark clipped foliage like golden balls. Amid the dark tree stems gleamed white marble gods and goddesses, the few which had not yet been hidden in their coffins ; they too, naked and chilled, seemed to hasten to warm themselves in the sun.

Two little girls came running into the room ; the nine-year old Anne, with black eyes, white skin and rosy cheeks, quiet, grave, fat and rather heavy, " a little barrel," as Peter was wont to call her. The younger one, Lisa, aged seven, with golden curls, blue eyes, sprightly as a bird, noisy, mischievous, slack at her lessons, and caring for only games, dancing and songs, was very pretty and already quite a little flirt.

" Aha ! you rascals ! " exclaimed Peter, and laying aside the newspapers, he put out his hands towards them with a loving smile. He embraced and kissed them, and lifted them one on to each knee.

Lisa pulled off his spectacles : she did not like them because they made him look older—quite a grandfather to them. Then she began whispering into his ear, confiding to him her long-cherished wish :—

" The Dutch boatswain, Issai Koenig told me about a green monkey which lives in Amsterdam. It is very tiny and could get into an Indian nut. Papa, darling, it *would* be nice if I could have that monkey ! "

Peter, doubting the existence of green monkeys, nevertheless was forced to promise solemnly, with a two-

fold oath, that he would write by the next courier to Amsterdam. Elizabeth was in raptures and began passing her hand through the blue ringlets of smoke which escaped from Peter's pipe, to string them together, as she explained.

Anne talked about the marvellous docility and good nature of her pet Mishka, the tame seal which lived in the middle fountain of the Summer Garden.

"Why couldn't we have a saddle made for him and ride him like a horse?"

"And suppose he dives, won't you get drowned?" asked Peter.

He talked and laughed with the children like a child.

Suddenly in the pier glass he caught sight of Mons and Catherine as they stood in the adjoining room before the Tsaritsa's pet, a green parrot, feeding it with sugar.

"Your Majesty's—a fool," shrieked hoarsely the parrot. He had been taught to say two phrases: "Good-morning, your Majesty;" "the parrot is a fool," but he joined both sentences in one. Mons bending down to the Tsaritsa was speaking to her almost in whispers. Catherine lowered her eyes, slightly blushed, and listened with the affected mincing smile of a shepherdess in the "Journey to the Isle of Love."

Peter's face grew suddenly dark. Nevertheless he kissed the children and affectionately sent them away,

"Now go, go, you little rascals; Anne will give my greetings to Mishka."

The sunbeam vanished. The room grew dark, damp and cold. A crow cawed just under the very window. Again the hammer was heard; the last of the risen gods were being nailed up and ensconced in their coffins.

Peter sat down to a game of chess with Bruce. He usually played well, but to-day he was absent-minded. He lost his queen after the fourth move.

"I checkmate with the queen," said Bruce.

"Your Majesty's—a fool," cried the parrot.

Peter happened to lift his eyes, again saw Mons and Catherine reflected in the same glass. They were so engrossed in their conversation that they did not notice how a little monkey, like a little devil, had crept up to them from

behind, and, making a waggish grimace, stretched out one paw to lift the bottom of Catherine's dress.

Peter jumped up and with his foot overturned the chess-board, scattering the pieces over the floor. He dropped his pipe, it broke and spilled its burning ashes. Bruce jumped up in terror. Catherine and Mons turned round, attracted by the noise. At this moment Mary Hamilton entered the room. She walked as in a dream, as it were hearing and seeing nothing. Passing the Tsar she slightly inclined her head and looked fixedly at him. Her beautiful lifeless face, which struck the beholder with chill, made her resemble one of those goddesses who were being nailed up in their coffins.

The Tsar followed her with his eyes till she had disappeared behind the door ; then, turning to Bruce and the overturned chess-board, he said in apologetic tones :—

“Forgive me; Bruce, it was an accident !”

He left the palace, stepped into his boat, and went to rest on the yacht.

CHAPTER V

PETER was a light sleeper. Walking or driving past the palace at night was forbidden. As it was impossible to avoid all noise in the house during the day he slept on his yacht.

To-day when he lay down, he felt wretchedly tired. Possibly he had got up too early and worn himself out at the Dockyards. He yawned, stretched himself, closed his eyes, and was already beginning to fall asleep, when he started as if from sudden pain. It was the thought of his son Alexis. It never quite left him; but when he was quiet and by himself it began to assert itself with renewed vigour like a probed wound.

He tried to sleep, yet sleep would not come. Thoughts surged through his brain.

He had received a few days ago Tolstoi's letter informing him that Alexis would on no consideration return. Would he really be driven to go to Italy himself, and begin a war with the Emperor and England, perhaps with the whole of Europe, now when he ought to be thinking of nothing save the termination of the war with Sweden and the establishment of peace? Why should the Lord punish him with such a son?

"Oh, heart of Absalom! who hatest all thy father's work and wishest thine own father's death," he moaned pressing his head against his hands.

He remembered how his son had described him before the Emperor and the whole world as a malefactor, a tyrant, an atheist. How his son's friends, the long-bearded priests and monks, called him Peter the Antichrist.

"Fools!" he thought with calm contempt. How could he have accomplished all he had without God's help? And

how could he help believing in God when God had always been with him, from his youngest days until this hour? Questioning his conscience as if he were his own confessor, he recalled his life.

Was it not God who had implanted in his heart the desire to learn? At sixteen he scarcely knew how to write; and could only do addition and subtraction sums with the greatest difficulty. But even then he already felt what afterwards he so clearly realised. "The salvation of Russia lies in *knowledge*. All other nations have adopted the policy of keeping Russia in ignorance and have prevented her acquiring knowledge, especially in military affairs, lest she should realise her own powers." He decided to go abroad himself and learn. When this decision was known in Moscow, the Patriarch, Boyars, Tsaritsas and Princesses came to him, laid his son Alexis at his feet, wept, and with foreheads bowed to the floor implored him not to go to school to the foreigners; for the like had never happened in Russia before. The people too wept, and saw him off as if to his death. And yet he went, and something unheard of happened; the Tsar took into his hands and wielded an axe instead of a sceptre. "My rank is that of a mere scholar, and I need teachers. You cannot buy for money what you do yourself." And God blessed his labours: a formidable army had been the outcome of his playing at soldiers, with what Sophia contemptuously termed—"grooms and riff-raff"; the little toy boats in which he sailed on artificial lakes had led to a victorious fleet. His first contest with the Swedes was the defeat at Narva. "The whole action was like child's play, without the least approach to military art. And now as I think it over, I consider it a dispensation of God, for when this misfortune befell us, necessity drove us from indolence to hard work, and made us apply ourselves to the study of military art night and day." The defeat seemed hopeless. Charles XII went about boasting, "whips, and not swords, would have sufficed to have driven the Russian *canaille* not only from their own country, but out of the world." If the Lord had not helped him then, surely he would have been lost!

There had been no copper for cannons. Peter melted down church bells. The monks threatened him with God's

punishment. But he knew God was with him. There were no horses ; men harnessed themselves and dragged the new artillery "cast in tears."

All was in a ferment like new wine. Outside the state war ; within revolution, a mutiny in Astrakhan and Boula-vinsk. Charles crossed the Vistula, the Niemen, and entered Grodno, two hours after Peter left it. Expecting day by day to see the Swedes advance towards Moscow or Petersburg, he reinforced both cities, and prepared them for siege. At the same time he was very ill, so ill that his life was despaired of. Again God intervened. Charles, contrary to all expectations and probabilities, stopped in his course, turned south-west and marched towards Small Russia. The mutiny subsided of itself. "The Lord had wonderfully quenched flame with flame, and showed us anew that all depends not on man's will but God's."

Then came the first victories over the Swedes. At the battle of Lesnoy, having stationed Cossacks and Kalmucks with spears in the rear, he ordered them to mercilessly demolish all deserters, not excepting even the Tsar. They stood the whole day under fire, their ranks remained unbroken, they did not yield an inch ; four times the guns became red hot with firing, four times the pouches and cartridges boxes had to be filled with cartridges. "Since I began to serve, I have not witnessed such play. We executed this dance well before the eyes of the hot-headed Charles. Henceforward the Swedes became more manageable."

Poltava ! Never in his whole life did he feel God's help more than on that day. Again good luck, almost a miracle ! On the eve Charles had been wounded by a Cossack's stray shot. Again, quite at the beginning of the day of battle, a shell struck the king's litter. The Swedes thinking Charles was killed, confusion ensued in their ranks. Peter looked at the flying Swedes and felt he was lifted on invisible wings ; he knew the day of the Poltava battle was the day of Russia's resurrection, and the radiant sun of that day the sun of the new Russia.

Now the existence of Petersburg is assured ; henceforth it will be possible to sleep peacefully in Petersburg. This town, created in defiance of the elements, amid bogs and

woods, "grows like a child in beauty," "it is a holy land, a paradise of God." Is it not also a great miracle, a sign of God's favour towards him, which will not pass away but remain visible before the face of the coming generations?

And now, when everything seemed to be accomplished, it all falls. God has withdrawn, and abandoned him? Having granted him victories over external foes He strikes Peter in his very heart, in his own flesh and blood, in his son. His son's most dreaded allies are not the foreign troops, but the armies of knaves, parasites and extortioners and other worthless folk which swarm in the Empire.

Peter judged how things would go after his death by the way they went during his last absence from Russia, when in the space of a couple of months all had begun to creak and stagger like some old vessel which had struck in a storm.

Enormous corruptions sprang into being. Ukase succeeded ukase in regard to bribery, the last always more severe than the preceding. Nearly every one of them began with the words: "Should any one defy this our last decree," but it was generally followed up by another containing the same threats and the addition that it was the last.

At times his heart would sink in despair. He felt a terrible impotence. Alone against them all, like a great wild animal bitten to death by gnats and flies.

Realising he could do nothing by force, he resorted to cunning. He encouraged tale-bearing. He instituted a special order of informers. This started universal chicanery and slander. "The informers see nothing—do not attend to their business, but live like parasites, shielding one another, because they all work into each other's hands." Knaves denounce knaves, impeachers denounce impeachers, informers informers, and the arch informer himself appears to be the arch knave.

A loathsome abyss, a bottomless cesspool, stables of Augeas which no Hercules can cleanse. Foulness penetrates everywhere—earth becomes mud, or dissolves like the snow in spring. The ancient rot re-appears on the surface. A stench spreads all over Russia, such as rose from the Poltava battlefield which drove the army away, choked by the stench of innumerable corpses.

Russian hearts are dull because darkness reigns in their

minds. They refuse the good for they recognise it not. The nobles and the simple folk are well represented by Jeremy and Thomas, two proverbial characters : "Jeremy does not teach ; and Thomas knows nothing." Laws are powerless in that state of things.

"Our understanding is dull, our hands unskilled, the people of our nation are heavy-minded," said the old people to him.

Once a Dutch boatswain told him the old legend :—

"Some sailors noticed in the ocean an unknown island. They moored their vessel to it, landed and made a fire to cook their food. Suddenly the earth began to shake and sank ; they narrowly escaped being drowned ; what seemed to them an island was in reality a sleeping whale."

Was all this new enlightenment of Russia a fire made on the back of a leviathan, the inert mass of a sleeping people ?

Cursed labours of a Sisypheus, labour similar to that of the convicts on Rogerwick, who build a breakwater ; no sooner does a storm rise than in one hour the labours of years lie destroyed ; and again they build, and again it is destroyed, and so on without end.

"We all see," an intelligent peasant once told him, "that you are a great sovereign and labour hard, but with little success, because helpers are wanting. You with the strength of ten men are pulling up while a million pull down hill ! What can come of this ?" "A burden, a terrible burden," groaned Peter on his couch, anguished as if the weight of Russia lay on him alone.

"Wherefore hast thou afflicted Thy servant ? and wherefore have I not found favour in Thy sight, that Thou layest the burden of all this people upon me ? Have I conceived all this people ? have I begotten them, that Thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which Thou swearest unto their fathers ? I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if Thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in Thy sight ; and let me not see my wretchedness !"

Suddenly he again remembered Alexis and felt that this

terrible burden, the deadly inertia of Russia, was incarnate in Alexis alone, his own son.

At last by a supreme effort of will he once more gained mastery over himself, called his orderly, dressed and returned by boat to the palace, where senators accused of bribery and corruption were summoned to appear before him.

CHAPTER VI

PRINCE MËNSHIKOV, Prince James and Basil Dolgoruki, Sheremetieff, Shafiroff, Jagushinski, Golovkin, Apraksin and others were crowded in the small reception room next to the workshop.

Fear possessed them all. They remembered how two years ago, two noble extortioners, Prince Volkonsky and Opouchtine, had been publicly flogged and had their tongues burnt with red hot irons.

Strange rumours were whispered ; officers of the guard and other military men were supposed to have been appointed to judge the senators.

Yet they hoped against hope that the storm would blow over, and all would again revert to the old way. They found consolation in old sayings : " Who has not sinned before God ? who is found guiltless before the king ? They can't hang us all. Everybody has his own foibles. Every man thirsts for a dainty. Whether honest men or knaves, all live under sin."

In strode Peter. His face was hard-set and stern ; only his eyes were flashing and the left corner of his mouth twitched slightly.

Without greeting them, without inviting them to sit down, he addressed the senators with words evidently prepared beforehand.

" Gentlemen of the Senate ! I have written and spoken to you many times about your negligencies, self indulgencies and entire disregard of civil laws ; my words have had no effect, and all ukases have been utterly ignored. I repeat for the last time, it is vain to issue laws, if they are not kept, but trifled or played with like a pack of cards, and sorted according to their colours ; a habit unheard

of anywhere else except in our country. And what will this corruption lead to? If robbery is allowed to pass with impunity, few will be strong enough to remain untempted, and thus, little by little, the law will deter none, the nation will be ruined, and God's wrath will be brought down upon it. And this, more surely than private perfidy, will bring the Empire not only to disaster but to its ultimate fall. Therefore it is meet and just to apply the same punishment to peculators as to deserters from the battlefield or traitors to the country."

He spoke without looking at anyone. And again he was conscious of his impotence. His words dropped like water off a duck's back. These humble, frightened faces, and averted eyes, all expressed the same thought. "Whether we are honest men or knaves, all are under sin."

"Henceforward no one must trust to his station," concluded Peter, his voice trembling with wrath. "I herewith declare, that a thief, whatever his rank, even though he be a senator, shall be judged by martial law."

"This cannot be," began Prince James Dolgoruki, a ponderous old man, with long white moustaches on his bloated purple face, fixing his bright childlike eyes on the Tsar. "This cannot be, Sovereign; soldiers cannot sit in judgment over senators. You will not only disgrace us; it is an unheard of affront to the whole Russian Empire."

"Prince James is in the right," rejoined Sheremetieff, a Knight of Malta; "nowadays the whole of Europe considers Russian aristocrats to be noble knights. Why should you disgrace us, Sovereign, rob us of our knighthood? Not all of us are robbers—"

"Who is innocent, traitor?" cried Peter, his face contorted with wrath. "Do you imagine I do not know you? I do, my friend, I see you through and through! Should I die to-day, you would be the first to stand up for that villain, my son. You are all siding with him."

But again with a supreme effort of will, he mastered his wrath, and having detected Ménshikov among the rest he said in a hollow, suppressed, yet perfectly calm voice:—

"Alexander, follow me!"

Together they went into the workshop. The prince was a small shrivelled-up man, frail-looking, but in reality strong

as iron, mobile as quicksilver, with a thin agreeable face and uncommonly quick, intelligent eyes, which reminded one of the street boy, who had at one time called out "Hot pies." He slipped in after the Tsar, cowed like a dog going to be thrashed.

The short fat Shafiroff sighed with relief and mopped his brow. Golovkin, long and thin as a pole, quaked, blessed himself with the sign of the cross and murmured a prayer. Jagushinski had fallen back in an arm-chair and groaned; fear had given him the colic.

Little by little, as the angry voice of the Tsar and the monotonous plaintive voice of Ménshikov reached them from the door—it was impossible to distinguish the words—all grew calmer. Some even rejoiced: it is nothing new for the Most Serene; he can stand a good deal, he has been used to the Tsar's cudgel from his youth, it is nothing to him, he will manage to get over it.

Suddenly shrieks and moans came from inside. The door flew open and out dashed Ménshikov. His gold embroidered kaftan was torn, the blue St. Andrew's ribbon was tattered, the decorations on his breast dangled, half torn off, the wig of royal hair—Peter at one time as a mark of friendship gave him his hair every time he had it cut—was all on one side; his face was bleeding. The Tsar came tearing after him, with an unsheathed short sword, and a fierce cry:

"I'll catch you, son of a bitch!"

"Peter! Peter!" rang out Catherine's voice; as usual she had appeared just in the nick of time.

She caught hold of him at the door, locked it and pressing her whole body against him, she clung to him, hanging on his neck.

"Let me go, let me go! I must kill him," he screamed, quite beside himself.

But she only huddled closer to him, repeating, "Peter! Peter! calm yourself, my sweetheart. Throw the knife away, the knife, throw it away, you will do some harm with it."

At last the little sword dropped from his hands. He threw himself into an arm-chair, his body twisted in violent convulsions. And again, as at the time after the last inter-

view between father and son, Catherine sat down on the arm of the chair, took his head between her hands and pressed it against her breast and began to gently stroke his hair, fondling and caressing him, as a mother her sick child. And gradually the gentle caress soothed him. The convulsions grew weaker. He continued to shudder, but less and less frequently. He no longer screamed, only moaned as if sobbing, crying without tears.

"It is hard, ah, so hard Catherine! I can bear it no longer! There is no one with whom I can talk things over. Not one helper. Always alone, alone! Is it possible for one man? Not even an angel, much less a man could stand it—the burden is too heavy!"

The moans gradually subsided, at last they ceased altogether—he fell asleep.

She listened to his breathing, it was regular. He always slept heavily after such fits, nothing could wake him as long as Catherine would sit by him. While one hand continued to encircle the head, the other under the semblance of a caress fumbled in the breast pocket of his kaftan with the quick motion of a thief. Feeling a bundle of letters she took them out, looked through them and found among them a large, soiled, evidently anonymous letter, in a blue wrapper, sealed with red wax, unopened; She guessed it was the one she was searching for, a second denunciation of her alliance with Mons, more alarming than the first. Mons (who afterwards died by torture) had warned her of the blue letter. He himself had learnt about it from the talk of some drunken servants.

Catherine was surprised her husband had not opened the letter. Was he afraid to learn the truth? Turning slightly pale, with teeth closely set, yet without losing her presence of mind, she looked into his face. He was peacefully slumbering, like a child after a big cry. She gently leaned his head against the back of the chair, undid a few buttons, crumpled the letter up and pushed it down into the hollow of her breast; then stooped, lifted the dirk from the floor, slit the pocket where the letters had lain, and also the bottom of the kaftan along the seam, so that the cut could be easily taken for a chance hole, and put the rest of the letters back in the pocket. Should Peter notice the dis-

appearance of the blue letter, he would easily think that it had dropped through into the lining and then slipped out through the rent and so got lost. Holes were not unusual in the Tsar's well-worn clothes.

Catherine did all this in a second, then she took Peter's head and pressed it again to her bosom and began to gently stroke, fondle and caress him, looking at the sleeping giant as a mother would at her sick child, or as a tamer of lions at his terrible animal.

He woke, composed and refreshed, at the end of an hour, as if nothing had happened.

Now the Tsar's dwarf had recently died. The funeral had been fixed on this day; it was to be one of those mock pageants Peter was so fond of. Catherine did her best to persuade him to postpone the funeral till the morrow and not go out, but have a rest to-day. Peter paid no heed; he ordered the drum to be beaten, the standards to be hung out. As though it were for some very important business, he hurriedly got himself ready, put on half mourning, half masquerading dress, and went off.

CHAPTER VII

CONCERNING MONSTERS AND ABORTIONS

“SINCE monsters or abortions are known to occur among human beings, animals and birds, and are in all countries collected as curiosities, a decree was issued some years ago that the aforesaid monstrosities should with us also be presented to public museums; but ignorant people try to conceal these things, thinking such deformities are caused by the devil, or by witchcraft and spells,—which is an impossibility, since God alone is the Creator of every living thing and not the devil, who has no dominion whatever over creatures.—Such monstrosities are the result of internal injury, or of the mother’s fear and imagination during the time of her pregnancy. There are many examples of children bearing the marks of whatever frightened their mothers. We renew this decree, so that without fail such abortions should be brought to the governors of each town, the bringer to receive payment for the same as follows: ten roubles for the body of a human prodigy, five for that of an animal, three for that of a bird; if alive, a hundred roubles for a human prodigy, fifteen for an animal, seven for a bird. And if they are exceptional more will be given. Those, who in spite of this decree, continue to conceal abortions must be reported, and when convicted will be fined a tenth of what their prodigy is worth and the money given to the informers. If the above-named deformities die, they shall be preserved in spirit, and if that is not within reach, double-distilled brandy or plain brandy, and securely sealed so as to prevent them putrefying; the brandy will be paid for out of a special fund.”

Peter had been very fond of his "Eminent dwarf" and had arranged a magnificent funeral for him.

First came thirty choristers walking two and two, all little boys, a tiny priest followed them, robed, and with a censer in his hand; he had been chosen from among all the Petersburg clergy for his short stature. Six small black horses covered with long black caparisons were drawing the small coffin on a toy carriage. Then solemnly, hand in hand, under the guidance of a diminutive master of ceremonies, who carried a huge staff, there walked twelve pairs of dwarfs, in long black mantles bordered with white crêpe, and the same number of female dwarfs,—all ranged according to their size, the smaller in front, the taller at the back, ranged like organ pipes. These dwarfs were humpbacked, fat-bellied, splay-mouthed, splay-footed, some like badger hounds and others more grim-looking than ludicrous. The procession was flanked on both sides by giant grenadiers and imperial guards, who bore in their hands burning torches and funeral tapers. One of the giants, dressed in a baby's shirt, was conducted in leading strings by two of the tiniest dwarfs with long grey beards; another, swaddled like a newborn infant, was drawn in a carriage by six tame bears.

Last of all came the Tsar, accompanied by all his generals and senators. Dressed as a Dutch naval master-drummer, he marched along with an important air, beating the drum.

The procession, followed by the crowd, passed along the Nevsky Prospect, from the wooden bridge across the river Fontanka to the cemetery in the Jamskoy Quarter. People looked out of their windows, ran out of their houses, and seized by superstitious fears, did not know whether to cross themselves or to spit; while the foreigners were saying—"Such a procession can be seen nowhere else save in Russia!"

It was five o'clock in the afternoon. Darkness was swiftly setting in. Wet snow fell in large flakes. Along both sides of the Prospect the two rows of bare limes and the low roofs of the houses gleamed in their white shroud. The fog thickened. In the muddy yellow mist illumined by the dull red glare of the torches the absurd procession seemed a nightmare, a diabolical suggestion.

The crowd, though frightened, ran after it, splashing

in the mud and whispering strange weird tales about the unclean spirits which were supposed to have taken up their abode in Petersburg.

Quite lately the night-watchman at the Troïtsa Church heard a noise in the nave, as if caused by hurried footsteps. And in the belfry too, somebody had been running up and down the ladder steps so heavily that the floors trembled, and when in the morning the clerk went to ring the bells, he saw that the ladder had been torn off and the bell rope coiled up.

"It is the devil himself," urged some.

"Not the devil, but an evil spirit," suggested others.

An old woman, who sold herrings on the Ochta, had herself seen the ghost at a spinning wheel, quite naked, lean, black, with a tiny head about the size of a thimble; you could not tell the body from a straw.

"Was it not the house-haunting spirit?" asked some one.

"House spirits don't visit churches," he was informed.

"Perhaps it was a stray one; they are liable to the same plague as cows and dogs. That's why they play pranks."

"It's the spring, In spring the house spirits moult, they shed their old skin; that is the reason they rummage about."

"Whether it be a house spirit, devil, or ghost, one thing is clear," they all agreed, "the spirit was a bad one."

In the muddy yellow mist illumined by the dull red flare of the torches, which cast monstrous shadows from the dwarfs, the procession itself seemed to be a manifestation of things evil.

More terrible tales yet went from mouth to mouth in the crowd as the dwarf's funeral went by.

On the Finnish side of the river, a priest, for the performance of some mad act, had attired himself in a goat's skin with horns, and this skin had at once stuck to him, and in this guise he was to be taken at night to execution. The son of a dragoon, Zwarikin, had sold his soul to the devil "who had appeared to him in the shape of a foreigner; the compact had been signed with blood." In the Apothecary's garden, the cemetery, thieves had opened a grave, broken the coffin and begun to drag out the body by his feet. They did not finish however, for they got frightened and ran away. In the morning, some one saw the feet sticking out of the

grave ; the news spread of the resurrection of the dead. In the Tartar Quarter, beyond the Crown works, an infant had been born with a cow-horn for a nose, and in the Mitny Dvor, a pig with a human face. "These are bad omens for the town where they happened." In one place a cock with five legs had appeared. In Ladoga blood had rained from the sky. The earth had trembled and groaned ; three suns had appeared.

"Some evil will happen, some evil," they all repeated.

"Petersburg will perish—and not only Petersburg, but the whole world is coming to an end. The day of judgment ! Antichrist !"

Frightened by these tales, a little boy, dragged along by his mother in the crowd, suddenly broke into sobs and screamed with fright. A woman in rags with a half crazy look, began shrieking in an inhuman voice. She was hurriedly taken to a neighbouring house. The Tsar did not dally with these hysterical women whom the people thought were possessed ; he flogged the devil out of them. "The tail of the knout reaches further than the devil's tail," he used to remark when informed of the pranks of Satan.

Many of the senators and nobles showed terror in their faces.

Prior to the procession starting, Shafiroff had handed to the Tsar the letters of Tolstoi and the Tsarevitch, brought by messenger from Naples.

The Tsar had them unopened in his pocket ; he probably did not want to read them in public. Shafiroff, however, from a short note received by him from Tolstoi knew already the amazing news ; it spread like wildfire.

"The Tsarevitch is returning !"

"Peter Tolstoi, the Judas, has lured him ! it is not the first he has led to perdition !"

"It is said the father has promised to marry him to Afrossinia !"

"Marry him ? What next, fool ! The block, not marriage, is in store for him."

"And suppose the marriage comes off ?"

"That marriage will be celebrated in the he-goat's bog ; the best man and match maker—the hatchet and block !"

"Fool ! Fool ! He is running blindfold to destruction."

"The young ox is on the brink of the precipice."

"*He* won't keep his head on long!"

"No! He may be pardoned. He is the Tsar's own son, not a stranger. Even the serpent does not devour her young. First a severe lesson, and then pardon."

"It is too late to teach, he is no longer a child and adults don't change."

"They should have taught him while he was tall as a bench is wide; but now that he covers the whole length of it, it is too late!"

"Come into my mortar, and I'll bray thee with my pestle, sweetheart! that will be his lesson!"

"They'll soothe the child finely, he won't make a sound; they'll see to that!"

"And we, too, shall in all probability have a hot time."

"A great calamity, brothers; even two minds are not enough to get one out of this scrape."

Among the nobles, as among the people, all repeated.

"Evil will befall us! Evil will befall us!"

Meanwhile on tramped the Tsar, tramping, marching through the mud, beating the drum, drowning the melancholy funeral chants. The mist thickened, the fog grew denser. Everything seemed to lose its precision, dissolve, grow phantom-like, and the whole town, together with its people, houses and streets, as if it would lift in another instant, together with the fog, and vanish into thin air.

CHAPTER VIII

ON his return from the funeral to the Summer Palace, Peter took a light wherry and rowed himself across the Neva to a small wooden landing stage on the opposite shore.

Here on the river's bank, close to the Trinity Church, stood a small, low house, one of the first buildings erected by the Dutch carpenters, in the earliest days of Petersburg—this was Peter's first palace; it resembled the modest huts of sailors in Saardam. The frame work was made of pine, grown in the wild Keiwussary bog on the Birch Island; it was painted to imitate the colour of bricks and roofed with wooden shingles instead of tiles.

The rooms were low, small, and only three in number. On the right side of the hall was the small working-room, on the left, the dining-room, and beyond, the bedroom, the smallest of the three, only about four yards long and three wide, hardly large enough to turn round in. The furniture was simple but homely, in the Dutch style. The ceilings and walls were covered with white canvas. The leaded windows were wide, low, and provided with oak shutters on iron hinges. The doors were hardly made for Peter; he had to stoop in order to prevent his head knocking against the lintel.

After the Summer and Winter Palace had been built, this little house stood empty. The Tsar seldom slept in it; only when he wanted to be quite alone, even without Catherine. On entering the hall, he woke the servant, who lay snoring on the felt carpet, ordered a light to be brought, and passed into the working-room, turned the key, placed the light upon the table, sat down in the arm-chair, and took out of his pocket the letters sent by Tolstoi, Roumiantzev

and the Tsarevitch. Yet before unsealing them he again stopped, as if hesitating; he listened to the measured, sonorous chimes of the Troïtsa Church clock. It struck nine. When the last sound had died away, a silence ensued as in those days when Petersburg was not in existence, and when there had stretched to the horizon only endless forests and impenetrable marshes.

At last he broke the seal. While reading, his face slightly paled, his hands trembled. When he reached the last words in his son's letter: "and will leave Naples together with your envoys in a few days for Petersburg," joy took his breath away; he could not read any further. He blessed himself with the sign of the cross.

Was not this again a miracle, a sign of God? He had been despondent, miserable, thinking God had forgotten him, and here again God's hand was revealed.

He felt again strong and vigorous, years younger, equal to any work or exploit.

Then hanging his head, and looking at the flickering flame of the candle he fell into a reverie.

When his son returned what should he do with him? "Kill him," he used to think in his fury, when there seemed to be no hope of his return. But now that Alexis was returning his fury had abated, and for the first time he asked himself the question, quite calmly, collectedly, "What shall I do?"

All at once he remembered the words written in his first letter, sent to Naples by Tolstoi and Roumiantzev: "I promise and declare in the sight of God that you shall suffer no punishment, but great love will be shown unto you, should you return." Now that his son had trusted to this oath, it acquired an awful power.

But how to fulfil it?

To forgive his son,—will this not also imply forgiveness for all other traitors to Tsar and country? A number of worthless people, peculators, thieves, parasites, hypocrites, monks, the whole party of stupor and reaction will join themselves to him and grow so fearless that no law will deter them. This will bring about the ruin of the Empire. And if his son in his father's lifetime so braves his father, what will he do after his death? "He will

destroy, scatter everything, not one stone will be left in its place, he will ruin Russia——”

No, better break the oath than pardon !

This will involve renewed examinations, tortures, piles of blazing wood, axes, gibbets, blood ?

He remembers how once, during the Streltsy execution, he rode on horseback to the Red Square, where on that day 300 heads were doomed to fall. The Patriarch met him with a wonder-working icon, imploring him to pardon the Streltsy. The Tsar bowed before the icon, but angrily pushed the Patriarch aside, saying : “Why have you come here ? I revere the Virgin no less than you do. But duty bids me pardon the just and punish the criminal. Go ! don’t detain me, old man, I know what I am doing.”

He could answer the Patriarch, but will he be able to answer God ?

And he saw as in a vision an endless row of heads, which lay on a long beam for a block, their faces to the ground, fair, auburn, black, grey, bald and curly. Drunk, coming straight from an orgy together with Danilitch and other guests, he strides in with an axe, like a headsman, and cuts off one head after the other. When he is tired the guests take the hatchet in turn from his hands and also strike. Blood has intoxicated them all. Their dress is splashed with blood, blood covers the earth, their feet slip on it. Suddenly one head, over which the axe is already lifted, slowly rises, turns round and looks into his eyes. It is he—little Alexis !

“Aliosha, my darling boy !” Another vision rises before him. He had come home from abroad, and at night he had stealthily found his way into his boy’s bedroom, he bent over the bed, took him up in his arms, kissing the sleepy little body, so soft and warm under his nightgown.

“*Kill his son !*” only now he realized what it meant. He felt it was the most important, most awful act of his life ; more important than Sophia, the Streltsy, Europe, science, the army, the fleet, Petersburg and Poltava, in that here his judgment for all eternity would lie. In one scale would be placed whatever good and great he had done ; in the other the death of this son. Who could tell which would weigh the heavier ? Would not all his glory be tarnished

by this stain of blood? What would Europe, what would posterity, say about an oathbreaker, a murderer of his own son? Difficult it would be for any who may not know all, to discern his innocence—and who would know all?

Can a man be justified before God for shedding his son's blood, even for the good of his country?

Which decision is he to make? Pardon his son, and ruin Russia; or kill his son and ruin his own soul and fame? He felt incapable of making any decision.

It was impossible to decide alone. But who could help him? The Church? What ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. That is how it used to be, but now, where is the Church? The Patriarch? He no longer existed. He himself had abolished that office. Or the Metropolitan, "Stephen the servitor," who falling to the ground himself petitions the Tsar? Or the Administrator of Spiritual affairs, Theodosius, the double-faced? He and the prelates are so bridled that they will follow any lead; whatever he tells them to do they will do it. He himself is the Patriarch, the Church. He stands alone before God.

And what did he rejoice at, insensate, a moment since? Yes, God's hand is truly spread over him and weighs heavily on him. It is terrible, terrible, to fall into the hands of the living God!—

An abyss yawned at his feet. Horror rose from it. His hair stood on end.

He hid his face in his hands.

"Depart from me, Lord! deliver me from bloodguiltiness O God, Thou God of my salvation!"

He rose and went into his bedchamber where in the corner over his bed a lamp was ever burning before the miraculous icon of Christ. This icon had been presented to the Tsar Alexis Michailovitch by the court painter, Oushakoff, and had at one time been placed in the hall of the Kremlin palace. It was a Russian replica of a very old Byzantine picture. According to the familiar tradition, our Lord on His way to Golgotha, fainting under the burden of the cross, had wiped the sweat off His brow with

Veronica's cloth, and the same had retained the imprint of His face. This was the first icon.

Ever since Peter's mother, Tsaritsa Natalia Kirilovna, had blessed her son with this icon, he had never parted from it. On all campaigns and voyages, on ships and in tents, at the foundation of Petersburg and on the field of Poltava, the icon always accompanied him.

On entering his bedchamber he added a little oil to the lamp and trimmed the wick. The flame glowed more vividly, and in the gold, which surrounded the dark face crowned with thorns, the diamonds sparkled like tears, the rubies like drops of blood.

Peter knelt and began to pray.

The icon had grown so familiar to him that he hardly noticed its real character and quite unconsciously always addressed his prayers to the Father and not to the Son; not to the God who dying shed His blood on Golgotha, but to the living God, mighty and strong in battle, the God of armies, the just Giver of Victories, Him who spoke of Himself through the mouth of the prophets: "I have trodden the people in mine anger, and trampled them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments and I have stained all my raiment."

But now, when he raised his eyes to the image and wanted as usual to address his prayers direct to the Father past the Son, he could not. He seemed for the first time to realise the *Sufferer's* face in the crown of thorns; and the countenance had gained life and penetrated into his very soul with His meek look. He seemed for the first time to fathom, what he had often heard in his childhood yet had never really grasped: the meaning of "the Father," and "the Son." All at once there flashed across his mind an ancient tragic story, also about a father and a son.

"God tempted Abraham and said unto him; take thy son, thy only son whom thou lovest and offer him for a burnt-offering. And Abraham built an altar and bound his son and laid him on the altar, and Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son."

This was only a prototype on earth of the yet more awful heavenly sacrifice. God so loved the world that He did not spare His only begotten Son. And the Father's wrath is

appeased by the blood of the Lamb, the blood of His Son which is ever flowing. Here was some near and all-important mystery, so terrible that he hardly dared to think about it. His thought grew faint, as in madness.

Did God want him, or not, to slay his son? Would this blood be forgiven or would it fall upon him? And what if this sin should be visited, not only on him, but on his children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, all Russia?

He fell on his face, and remained a long time prostrate, motionless, as if dead.

At last he lifted his eyes again to the image, but now with a desperate, frenzied prayer, straight to the Father.

"Let this blood fall on me, me alone! Slay me, O Lord, but spare Russia!"

Book VIII

THE WERE-WOLF

CHAPTER I

ALEXIS had his eyes fixed on the door through which Peter was expected to enter.

The yellow February sun flooded the small reception room of the Preobrazhensky Palace, a house almost as white and plain as the Tsar's house in Petersburg. The windows opened on a landscape familiar to Alexis from earliest childhood ; a snow-covered field dotted with black crows, grey walls of barracks, prison buildings, earth ramparts with pyramids of cannon balls, sentry houses and motionless sentinels outlined against the transparent emerald sky. Sparrows were chirping on the window-sill, just as in spring ; clear drops fell like tears from stalactites of ice. It was nearing midday, an odour betrayed the cooking of a cabbage pie. The monotonous ticking of a clock's pendulum alone broke the silence.

The Tsarevitch had been calm, almost gay, throughout the journey from Naples back to Russia ; a kind of insensibility seemed to have possessed him ; he had been unable to realize what was happening to him, or why and whither he was being taken back.

Only now, sitting waiting with Tolstoi in the reception room and gazing, just as on that nervous night in Naples, at a fatal door, he seemed to awake and begin at last to understand. Just as then he trembled as in a fever, now crossing himself with muttering prayers, now gripping Tolstoi's hand :

" Peter Andreitch ! Peter Andreitch ! what will happen ? I confess I am afraid ! "

Tolstoi tried to pacify him with his velvety voice "Courage, your Highness ! A sin confessed is half forgiven. With God's help everything will arrange itself, slowly, gently and peacefully——"

The Tsarevitch did not listen, he was rehearsing the speech he had prepared :—

"Father, I can justify nothing. I only pray with tears for your gracious forgiveness and fatherly dispensation. I have no other hope save God and you ; and I give myself up into your hands."

Familiar steps approached the door. It opened. Peter came in.

Alexis jumped up, stumbled and would have fallen had not Tolstoi supported him.

As in the momentary metamorphosis of a were-wolf, two faces flashed before Alexis, a strange, terrible one like a death-mask, and also the familiar one, his father's face as he remembered it in his earliest childhood.

The Tsarevitch came forward and was going to fall on his knees, but Peter stretched out his arms to meet him and pressed him to his bosom.

"Welcome, Aliosha, thank the Lord ! thank the Lord ! we have met at last——"

Alexis felt the familiar touch of his father's plump, clean-shaven cheek, the old smell of strong tobacco and sweaty clothes ; he saw the large, dark, lucid eyes, dear and yet so terrible ; the winning, slightly cunning, smile on the thin, curved, almost feminine lips, Forgetting his long speech, he only stammered out :—

"Forgive me, father !"

And bursting into irrepressible sobs, he repeated again and again : "Forgive, forgive !"

His heart had melted suddenly, like ice before fire.

"Aliosha, quiet, quiet, my boy, quiet !"

The father was stroking his son's hair, kissing his forehead and eyes with the tenderness of a loving mother.

Meanwhile Tolstoi witnessing this tenderness, said to himself, "The hawk will kiss the chicken till the last feather has gone."

The Tsar made a sign and he disappeared.

Peter took his son into the dining-room. The dog

Lisette growled at first, but, recognizing the Tsarevitch, wagged her tail in confusion and licked his hand. The table was set for two; an orderly brought in the dishes together and left the room. They remained alone. Peter poured out two glasses of anisette cordial.

"Your health, Aliosha!"

They clinked glasses. The hand of the Tsarevitch trembled so violently that he upset half his liquor.

Peter had prepared "zakouska," a favourite dish of his, a slice of black bread with butter, spread with minced onion and garlic; he halved the piece, one part for himself, one for his son.

"You have grown thin abroad," he said, looking at his son, "wait a bit, we'll soon fill you out. Russian bread is better feeding than the German."

He pressed him to eat and drink with many a jocular saying.

"Bumper on bumper is not like blow on blow!" "All good things go in threes!" "To multiply himself by four makes the guest more cheerful than before!"

The Tsarevitch ate little, but he drank much and soon became over-exhilarated, more from joy, however, than wine.

He was still timid, he had not fully recovered his senses, he could hardly trust his eyes and ears. Yet his father's talk was so simple and good humoured that it was impossible not to hope. He inquired after everything, wanted to know all about Italy, the fleet, the Pope, and the Emperor. He joked with him like a comrade.

"Your taste is not bad, sir," he winked at Alexis. "Afrossinia is a strapping—a superb wench; were I ten years younger it might have happened (who knows?) that you'd have had to beware of *me*. I might have put horns on ye! It's evident the apple does not fall far from the tree! The father with a washerwoman, the son with a charwoman, for they say Afrossinia washed floors formerly at the Viasemaski's house. Eh, but what of it? Catenka washed clothes. Do you want to get married?"

"If you would permit it, father."

"What else can I do? I promised you, and can't help myself now."

Peter poured some red wine into crystal goblets ; they raised and clinked them, the crystal rang, the wine glowed like blood in the sunshine.

"To peace and eternal friendship !" said Peter.

They drained their glasses to the last drop.

Alexis turned giddy. His spirits took wild wings ; his heart now sank, now throbbed, as if it would burst ; he thought he would die of joy. Present, Past and Future—all had disappeared. He remembered, saw, felt, only one thing, his father's love. It might only be for a moment. What of it ? To pay for the happiness of this moment, a whole life of torment would be nothing. He longed to speak out and confess everything.

Peter, as if divining his thought, touched his hand with a gentle caress.

"Tell me, Aliosha, all about your flight."

The Tsarevitch felt that the moment had come which would decide his fate, and that suddenly what he had tried to ignore, ever since he had first resolved to return to his father, lay clearly before him. A choice was inevitable ; he had either to relate everything without restraint, name his accomplices, and betray his friends ; or else deny everything, and so doing allow the insurmountable barrier-wall to grow up, the bottomless abyss between himself and his father to open anew.

He remained silent, his eyes cast down, afraid lest the unfamiliar, terrible death-mask face had taken the place of the loved one. At last he got up, approached his father and fell on his knees before him. Lisette, who had been sleeping on a cushion at Peter's feet, woke up, rose and went away leaving her place to Alexis. He sank down on the cushion. Were it but possible to remain for ever at his father's feet, like a dog, looking into his eyes, waiting to be fondled, petted.

"I will tell you everything, only forgive them all, as you have forgiven me," said he, with a look of intense adoration. His father stooped and laid his hands on Alexis' shoulders with the same gentle tenderness :—

"Listen, Aliosha ! How can I forgive while ignorant of both the innocent and the guilty ? I can forgive so far as I myself am concerned, but not a crime against the country.

God will ask me to account for this. He who tolerates evil, works evil himself. One thing I can promise, I will pardon all those you name, but terrible penalties will fall on those whose names you conceal. Therefore, be not a traitor, but the protector of your friends, conceal nothing from me, tell me everything. Don't be afraid, I will hurt no one. We will think it all over between us."

Alexis remained silent. Peter embraced him, pressed his head against his breast, and added with a heavy sigh:—

"Aliosha, Aliosha, could you but see my heart, know my grief! It fares sadly with me! I have no one to help me, I am always alone. All are enemies, evildoers, you at least have compassion on me. Be my friend, or do you not want to? Do you not love me?"

"I love you, my dearest father!" whispered Alexis with that same timid tenderness, as in his childhood, when his father would sometimes secretly come at night and take his sleeping boy up in his arms. "I will tell you all, all, ask me?"

And he told everything; named everybody.

Yet when he ended Peter was still waiting for the main point. He had expected a plot, and found none; only words, rumours, gossip, illusory suggestions, on which it was impossible to base real inquiry. Alexis took the whole fault upon himself, and exonerated all the rest.

"When I was drunk I used to say all sorts of things; I could not control my tongue before others, I troubled them by my vain fancies and seditious conversation."

"But apart from talk, there was no thought for action, for stirring up the people to revolt? Did they not desire to put you in my place by force?"

"No, father, I swear it! Nothing of the sort was ever contemplated. There were words only—words!"

"Did your mother know about the flight?"

"I don't think she did," then after a pause he added: "I can say nothing definite about that."

He stopped short and cast down his eyes. He remembered the visions and prophecies of Bishop Dositheus of Rostoff and other monks, prophecies which his mother believed in and rejoiced at; the fall of Petersburg, the death of Peter, the ascendancy of Alexis. Should he

mention this too? Betray his mother? Mortal anguish gripped his heart, he felt he could not speak about this. Besides, his father did not ask for it. What did it matter to him? Could such a man as he be moved by women's babble?

"Is this all, or have you something else upon your mind?" asked Peter.

"I have, only I know not how to word it. I am afraid."

He pressed close to his father, and hid his face upon his father's bosom.

"Speak, it will ease you. Speak out and clear yourself, as in a confession."

"When you were ill," Alexis whispered into his ear, "I thought you would not live, and I rejoiced! I wished you dead."

Peter slowly, gently pushed him back and looked straight into his eyes. He saw there what he had never seen before in human eyes.

"Did you contemplate my death with any one?"

"No, no, no!" exclaimed Alexis, with such terror on his face and in his voice that his father believed him.

In silence they gazed at one another, their look had the same expression, and these two faces, so different, were suddenly alike. They reflected and fathomed one another like two mirrors.

Suddenly the Tsarevitch smiled feebly and said simply, but with a voice so strange, so altered that it seemed that, not he, but some one else was speaking through him:—

"I know father, it is perhaps impossible for you to forgive me. So be it, have me beaten, killed. I would die for you, only love me! love me always. Let no one know about this—you and I alone will know, you and I——"

His father did not answer, but covered his face with his hands.

Alexis looked at him as if expecting something.

At last Peter uncovered his face, again stooped to his son, took his head between his hands and silently kissed him. For the first time in his life the Tsarevitch saw tears in his father's eyes. Alexis wanted to say something more, but Peter rose and hurriedly left the room.

The same day in the evening, his new confessor, Father Varlaam, came to the Tsarevitch.

On his return to Moscow, Alexis had begged to have his former confessor, Father James Ignatief. He was refused, and Father Varlaam was appointed instead. He was an old man, "without guile," "quite a chicken," according to Tolstoi's expression.

The Tsarevitch was glad, however, to have even him ; he longed for an opportunity of confessing as soon as possible. He repeated in confession all he had said to his father. He also added what he had held back from him, as to his mother, the Tsaritsa Eudoxia, his aunt the Tsarevna Marya, and his uncle, Abraham Lopoukhin, and their united wish for a "speedy fulfilment,"—his father's death.

"You ought to have spoken the whole truth to your father," remarked Father Varlaam, who appeared somewhat agitated. Something strange, hasty and mysterious seemed to have passed between them, yet so instantaneously that Alexis could not say whether it was real or only a fancy.

CHAPTER II

ON the morning of Monday, February 3, 1718, two days after Peter's first interview with Alexis, a meeting was summoned of all the ministers, generals, prelates and other civil and clerical officials in the Audience Hall of the old Kremlin Palace. The assembly was convoked to hear the manifesto, declaring the abdication of the throne by the Tsarevitch, and to take the oath of allegiance to the new heir, Peter Petrovitch.

Battalions of the Preobrazhensky Guard were stationed within the walls of the Kremlin, in all the squares, palace galleries and staircases. A rising was feared.

In the Audience Hall nothing of the old decoration had been retained save the frescoes on the ceiling, which represented the course of the stars, the twelve months of the year, and other heavenly phenomena.

All the rest were new: Dutch tapestries, crystal chandeliers, straight-backed chairs, narrow pier glasses between the windows. In the centre of the hall, under a red silk canopy, on a raised platform, reached by three steps, stood the throne, a gilt arm-chair with a golden double-headed eagle, and the keys of St. Peter embroidered on the crimson velvet.

Slanting rays of pale sunshine fell through the windows upon the white wigs of the senators and the black hoods of the prelates. The faces of all present expressed fear and that eager curiosity which is seen in a crowd at executions. The drum rolled.

A movement passed through the crowd, it separated, the Tsar entered and took his seat on the throne.

Two huge Preobrazhensky guards, with drawn swords, led in Alexis, like a prisoner.

Without wig or sword, dressed in a plain black suit, pale,

yet calm and méditative, he walked slowly, his head bent low. When near the throne and he saw his father, a gentle smile, which recalled his grandfather, the gentle Tsar Alexis, lit up his face.

Tall, narrow across the shoulders, with a thin visage surrounded by scanty tufts of straight smooth hair, suggesting now a village deacon, now the image of Saint Alexis, amid all these new Petersburg faces he seemed a being apart, a stranger as it were from another world, a phantom of ancient Muscovy. On many a face pity for this phantom mingled with curiosity and fear.

He stopped near the throne, not knowing what to do next.

"Kneel ! kneel ! and speak what you have prepared !"

Tolstoi whispered to him from behind.

The Tsarevitch knelt and began in a loud calm voice :—

"Most gracious Sovereign and Father ! On recognising my transgression towards you, as my parent and sovereign, I wrote a penitent letter and sent it to you from Naples ; to-day I repeat and declare that, forgetful of my duties as a son and subject, I deserted Russia and put myself under the Emperor's protection, entreating him to defend me. For which transgression I beseech your gracious pardon and forgiveness."

After this he bowed low before his father, not according to ceremonial, but prompted solely by his heart.

On a sign from the Tsar, the Vice-Chancellor Shafiroff began reading the manifesto, which the same day would be read, by order, to the people in the Red Square.

"We trust that it is known to the greater number of our faithful subjects how assiduously and carefully we have striven to bring up our first-born son, Alexis. But all our efforts were in vain, the seed fell on stony soil ; our son did not only not profit by it, but hated study, and has shown no inclination whatever for military and civil affairs. He has preferred intercourse with worthless, vile people of coarse habits."

Alexis hardly listened. He was trying to meet his father's eye. But the latter gazed past him with a motionless, impenetrable look. "Feint, dissimulation !" Alexis assured himself ; "revile me, beat me, if you will, I still know you love me !"

Shafiroff continued: "And, seeing his obstinacy in wrongdoing, we declared unto him that, should he not act according to our will in future, we would disinherit him. And we granted him time to amend his ways. But he, forgetful of all responsibility, and of God's law, which commands obedience to parents generally, and much more to a father who is a sovereign, repaid our manifold parental cares with unheard-of ingratitude. When, having left him in Petersburg on our departure for the campaign in Denmark, we wrote him thence summoning him to Copenhagen, to take part in the action and thus increase his military knowledge, he, our son, instead of joining us, furnished himself with a good supply of money, took a certain woman with whom he lived unlawfully, deserted and went to put himself under the protection of the Emperor. Having declared many untrue calumnies against his father and his sovereign, he entreated the Emperor, not only to hide him, but also to defend him with armed force against us, his enemy and torturer, from whose hands he expected to suffer death. To what shame and dishonour before the world he brought our country by this his action, is evident! It is difficult to find a precedent for it in history! Yet, though he, our son, has by all these misdoings earned death, we pity him with our fatherly heart, forgive and free him of all punishment. But——"

Here a strange hollow, husky, terrible voice interrupted the reading. It was the voice of Peter, so full of anger and grief that all formality seemed to vanish, and every one suddenly realized the horror of the situation.

"I cannot have an heir who would waste all that his father, with God's help had gained, and would overthrow the glory and honour of the Russian people. I should fear to meet my God if I entrusted the Government to one I knew to be unfit for it. And you——"

He looked at his son, and Alexis' heart sank, he felt there was no dissembling.

"And you remember this; though I have pardoned you, yet if you have made a single omission or reservation which comes out later, do not reproach me, it will cost you your pardon. You shall suffer death——"

Alexis leant forward, his hands raised in eager protest; he wanted to speak, to cry out to his father, but Peter looked past him with his motionless, impenetrable look. At a sign from the Tsar, Shafiroff continued reading :—

“ Thus in our anxiety for our country and subjects we herewith by reason of our power as father and absolute sovereign, take from our son Alexis, for his sins and misdoings, the right to succeed to the Russian throne, even though no one of our family should survive him, And we herewith appoint and declare our son Peter, though yet a child, heir to the throne, seeing we have no other grown-up heir. And we conjure our son Alexis never to lay any claim to the succession. We desire all our faithful subjects and the whole Russian people after this our wish and declaration to consider our son Peter appointed by us as the legitimate heir, and to revere him as such, and to ratify this by oath in the sanctuary upon the holy Gospels, kissing the cross. All those who from this day forth contrary to our desire shall persist in considering our son Alexis heir to the throne, and help him with this intent, we herewith declare traitors to us and to the country.”

The Tsar rose and ordered all those present to go to the Church of the Assumption, where the oath of allegiance was to be taken.

When all except Tolstoi, Shafiroff and a few other of the highest dignitaries had retired from the hall, Peter said to his son :—

“ Follow me ! ”

Together they crossed the vestibule into “ the Secret Chamber of Replies ” whence the ancient Tsars of Muscovy, concealed behind silk curtains, listened to the conferences of ambassadors in the adjoining hall. It was a small room, with bare walls and a mica window which always let in yellow-amber twilight. In the other corner before the Saviour’s icon, a dark, meek, sorrowful face in a crown of thorns, a holy lamp was always kept burning. Peter shut the door and came up to his son.

As on that terrible day at Naples in his delirium, and a few days since in Preobrazhensky, the Tsarevitch shivered and trembled. But he hoped still ; surely his father would

presently embrace him, say that he still loved him, and all these terrors would vanish for ever.

"I know you love me," he kept repeating under his breath to himself, like some formula of faith. Nevertheless his heart beat with dread.

He dropped his eyes and dared not lift them, feeling his father's heavy steadfast glance upon him. Both remained silent. All was hushed around them.

"Did you hear," Peter said at last, "what has just been declared before the people? one concealment will cost you your life."

"I heard it, father."

"And have you nothing to add to what you declared the day before yesterday?"

Alexis remembered his mother, and again he felt he could not betray her, even though it meant instant death. "Nothing," said he; as though some one else, not himself, had spoken.

"Are you sure there is nothing?" repeated Peter.

Alexis remained silent.

"Speak!"

Alexis grew dizzy, his feet hardly supported him. Yet again somebody seemed to answer for him.

"Nothing."

"You lie," cried Peter, seizing him by the shoulders so violently that it seemed his bones would be broken. "You lie. You have concealed all about your mother, your aunt, your uncle Dositheus of Rostoff, and their whole cursed brood, the root of all this wicked rebellion."

"Who told you, father?" stammered Alexis, looking at him for the first time.

"Is it not true?" His father looked straight at him.

His hand grew heavier and heavier. The Tsarevitch tottered like a reed under the weight, and sank at his father's feet.

"Forgive, forgive!—She is my mother; she bore me!"

Peter bent over him, raised his fist above his son's head and swore. Alexis stretched out his hands as if to ward off a mortal blow.

He raised his eyes and saw bending over him again, as in the momentary metamorphosis of a were-wolf, transformed

again ; only now instead of the familiar loved one, the other strange terrifying face, like a death-mask, the face of the beast, remained before him.

He gave a faint cry and covered his face with his hands.

Peter turned round to go out. But Alexis, hearing his father move towards the door, hurried after him on his knees, like a dog, which, though beaten, still begs for pardon. He clung to his feet, embraced and held on to them.

"Don't go away, don't—rather kill me."

Peter tried to push him away and free himself. But Alexis held on, clinging tighter and tighter.

The touch of these hands, which convulsively gripped and held him back, sent an icy, cold shudder of disgust through Peter, such as he felt towards spiders, cockroaches, and other creeping vermin.

"Away, away, away, or else I'll kill you!" he cried in fury, mingled with terror.

At last with a desperate effort he shook him off, spurning Alexis on the face with his foot. The Tsarevitch with a hollow groan fell to the ground, like one dead. Peter ran out of the room, as if escaping from some monster.

When he passed the dignitaries who were awaiting him in the hall, they saw in his face that something terrible had happened.

He called to them shortly : "To the Church!" And he went out.

Some followed after him ; others, Tolstoi and Shafiroff among them, hurried to the Secret Chamber of Replies.

The Tsarevitch continued to lie with his face to the ground, as lifeless. They began to lift him, trying to bring him back to consciousness. His joints would not straighten out ; contracted by convulsions they had become rigid. Yet it was not a swoon. His breathing was rapid, his eyes open.

At last they succeeded in putting him on his feet. They wanted to lead him into the adjacent room and lay him on a bench. He looked around him with a troubled, blank gaze and murmured, trying to recall what had happened, "What is it, what is it?"

"Don't be afraid," Tolstoi said to calm him, "you

swooned, fell, and probably hurt yourself ; it will soon pass. Here is some water, drink it, and the doctor will be here presently."

"What is it ? what is it ?" Alexis repeated mechanically.

"Had we not better inform the Tsar ?" whispered Tolstoi to Shafiroff.

The Tsarevitch heard him ; he turned round, and his pale face suddenly grew livid. A fit of trembling seized him, and he started tearing the collar of his shirt as though he were choking, while he began to cry and laugh so wildly that all were frightened.

"What Tsar ? Fools, fools, don't you see anything ? That is not he, that is neither the Tsar nor my father. He is a drummer, an accursed Jew, an impostor, a pretender. Gregory Otriopieff—a were-wolf ! Ram a pike down his throat and that will finish him !"

The Court Physician, Areskin, hurried into the room. Tolstoi, unseen by the Tsarevitch, pointed to him, then touched his own forehead, as much as to say, "The Tsarevitch is going out of his mind."

Areskin placed Alexis in an arm-chair, felt his pulse, made him smell ether, take some soothing medicine, and was just going to bleed him, when in came a messenger who stated that the Tsar was waiting in the Church and desired the Tsarevitch to come at once.

"Go and say that his Highness is ill," began Tolstoi.

"There is no need," interrupted Alexis, awaking as from a deep slumber. "No need. I will go presently. Only give me a moment's rest and a little wine."

They handed him some Tokay. He drank it eagerly, Areskin put a towel on his head soaked with vinegar and cold water. They left him alone and went aside, conferring on what had better be done.

After a few minutes he said :—

"I feel better. Let us go."

They helped him to get up, and supported him as he walked.

The fresh air revived him while crossing from the palace to the Church ; but when passing through the crowd everybody noticed his pallor.

On the platform in front of the open gates of the iconostasis, which permitted a view of the altar, Fedor Prokopovitch, the newly appointed Bishop of Pskoff, fully robed, was awaiting Alexis with Crucifix and Gospels. The Tsar stood beside him.

Alexis went up to the platform, took from Shafiroff a sheet of paper and began to read in a weak, scarcely audible voice, but the crowd was so hushed that every word was clearly heard.

"I, the undersigned, promise on the holy Gospels, that I, having forfeited my inheritance of the Russian throne on account of my sins against my father and sovereign, therefore acknowledge it to be just, and swear by the Almighty and Triune God and His judgment to submit to this my father's will without fail, and never to seek the succession, nor accept it under any pretext whatever. I acknowledge my brother Peter to be the legitimate heir. Upon which I kiss the Holy Cross and sign with mine own hand."

He kissed the cross and signed the abdication.

At the same time the manifesto was being read to all the people.

CHAPTER III

PETER sent an "Interrogatory" to Alexis by Tolstoi. The Tsarevitch was expected to answer in writing. Tolstoi advised him to conceal nothing, as the Tsar apparently knew everything, and required from his son only the confirmation.

"Who told my father?" asked Alexis.

Tolstoi at first would not reply. Finally, he read to him a decree, unpublished as yet, but proclaimed later on at the establishment of the Ecclesiastical College, the Holy Synod:—

"If any one confesses to his priest a wicked and unrepented design against the honour and welfare of the Tsar, or worse still, treason or revolt, the confessor is obliged to report the same at once to the secret Chancery. This declaration does not violate the confession, and the confessor does not break the laws of the Gospel, but conforms to Christ's teaching: 'Tell thy brother his fault, and if he will not hear thee, tell it unto the Church.' If our Lord ordains the offence of a brother to be thus divulged, how much more does the rule apply to a mischievous plot against the Tsar?"

Having listened to the ukase, the Tsarevitch left the table—he had been supping alone with Tolstoi—and as before, during the fit in the Secret Chamber, his pale face suddenly grew flushed. He cast a look at Tolstoi which alarmed the latter and made him fear another attack. But it passed off this time. The Tsarevitch grew calm and fell into a reverie.

For several days he remained in this pensive mood. When people talked to him he looked vacantly at them, without appearing to understand. He had grown still thinner; "he hardly seemed alive," as Tolstoi said.

Nevertheless, he wrote precise answers to the questions,

and confirmed all he had said in confession, though he felt that it was useless, and that his father would believe nothing.

Alexis saw that Father Varlaam had broken the secrecy of the confession. The words of St. Demetrius of Rostoff came to his mind.

"Should any sovereign or civil tribunal order, under threats of death and torture, the priest to reveal the sin of his penitent, the priest ought rather to die a martyr than break the seal of confession."

He also remembered the words of an old Raskolnik with whom he once had talked in the depths of the thick forests near Novgorod, where, by his father's order, he was felling pines.

"God's blessing rests no longer on the churches, priests, sacraments, readings, hymns, icons nor on any other thing—it has all been taken back to heaven. He who fears God does not go to church. Do you know what your sacrificial lamb is like? Mark my words: it is like a dead dog thrown into the streets of the city. He who partakes of the communion dies, poor wretch. Your Host is as deadly as arsenic or corrosive sublimate; it instantly penetrates to the very bone and marrow, to the very soul, after which, rest in the flames of hell, and moan there like Cain, the lost one."

These words, meaningless enough at the time, now acquired extraordinary meaning. What if it were true that the abomination of desolation had come into the holy place, that the Church had forsaken Christ and that Antichrist were now reigning?

But who was Antichrist? Here the delirium began.

His father's image seemed double; as in a momentary metamorphosis of a were-wolf the Tsarevitch saw two faces—the kind, beloved face of his father, and the strange, terrible, mask-face—the face of the Beast. Yet the thing most terrifying was that he could not definitely say which of the two was the *real* face. Does his father change into the Beast? or the Beast into his father? Such horror seized him that he feared madness.

Meanwhile the trial had begun in the torture chambers at Preobrazhensky Palace.

On the 4th of February, the day after the reading of the manifesto, orders were sent to Petersburg and Soudal that all those whom the Tsarevitch had named should be brought at once to Moscow.

Alexander Kikin, Ivan Afanasieff, Alexis' valet, his teacher, Viazemski, and many others were arrested in Petersburg.

On the journey to Moscow, Kikin tried to strangle himself with his chains, but was prevented. The inquiry wrung from him the name of Prince Basil Dolgorouki, as being Alexis' chief adviser.

"I was fetched from Petersburg without a word of warning," related Prince Basil afterwards, "and brought in iron fetters to Moscow; this caused me great despair. I was taken to Preobrazhensky, given into strict custody, and then brought before his Majesty; I was in great fear, realizing that the words written by the Tsarevitch about me implied in the eyes of the Tsar that I had committed a great crime."

His relative, Prince James, interceded on his behalf.

"Be merciful, Sovereign," he wrote to the Tsar. "Do not let our old age be dishonoured, do not let us go down to the grave with the name of malefactors, which not only stains our glory but also destroys our life. Therefore, again I implore mercy! mercy! O most merciful Sovereign!"

But a shadow of suspicion fell on Prince James himself. Kikin revealed that James Dolgorouki had advised Alexis not to join his father at Copenhagen. Peter did not touch the old man, yet so severe was his threat that Prince James thought it necessary to remind the Tsar of his former faithful services, "for which now I hear impalement will be my reward," he concluded bitterly.

Again Peter felt his terrible loneliness. If even "the righteous" Prince James was a traitor, whom could he trust? Captain Gregory Skorniakoff Pissareff brought from Soudal the ex-Tsarina Eudoxia—now "Sister Helen." She wrote to the Tsar on her way.

"MOST MERCIFUL SOVEREIGN,—

Many years ago, I do not exactly remember when,

according to my promise I took the veil at the Soudal nunnery, under the name of Sister Helen. After taking the veil I wore the habit for six months, but no longer wishing to remain a nun I gave up the sisterhood, left off the habit, and lived concealed at the monastery under the guise of a nun, but was really a woman of the world. My secret was detected by Gregory Pissareff. I now trust to your Majesty's humanity and pity. At your feet I seek mercy and crave pardon and forgiveness for my misdeeds, that I be not put to death like a criminal. I promise to resume the habit and remain in the nunnery until my death. I will pray for you, Sire,

“Your Majesty's lowliest servant,

“Your former wife, EUDOXIA.”

The woman treasurer of the convent reported :—

“We dared not ask the Tsaritsa, ‘Why have you cast off the nun's garb?’ She said several times, ‘The Tsar has taken everything that belonged to us. You know how the Tsar avenged himself on the Strelsi on account of his mother; now my own son is no longer a child!’ When Major Stephen Gleboff was on recruiting duty at Soudal the Tsaritsa admitted him to her cell. They used to talk together while I was sent off to cut out garments, or they begged me to chant the *Te Deum*. When Gleboff showed himself insolent, I used to say to him: ‘Who are you, to make so bold? Things are known.’ The Tsaritsa got angry with me for that, ‘Who in the devil's name asked you to meddle? You also are now a spy.’ And others said to me, ‘Why have you angered the Tsaritsa?’ Stephen visited her by night. A porter and the dwarf Agatha used to tell me, ‘Gleboff passes us, but we dare not budge.’

“The nun Kaptelina confessed that Gleboff frequently visited the Tsaritsa (Sister Helen) and kissed her. I used to leave the room. I carried Gleboff's love letters.”

Gleboff's statement was short.

“I fell in love with the ex-Tsaritsa and we lived in sin together.”

For the rest Gleboff steadily denied everything. They tortured him frightfully; he was flogged, burnt, frozen, his ribs were broken, his body torn with pincers. He was

forced to sit on a board studded with nails, walk along wooden spikes till his feet festered. He withstood all pains and neither denounced anyone, nor admitted anything more.

The ex-Tsaritsa made the following deposition :

" On February 21, I, the nun Helen, have been brought to the General Court and have been confronted with Stephen Gleboff. I declare that I am guilty of having lived in adultery with him. Written by mine own hand, Helen."

This confession Peter intended to publish later in a manifesto.

The Tsaritsa further confessed :—

" I cast off the nun's garb because the Bishop Dositheus prophesied, he spoke of voices coming from icons and of many visions, that God's wrath would come upon us, and trouble spread among the people ; how the Tsar would soon die, and that I, the Tsaritsa, would reign henceforth with my son."

Dositheus was arrested, and degraded in the council from his office of Bishop ; he was named " Demid the unfrocked."

" I alone have been punished," Dositheus addressed the council, " look and see what is in all hearts ; carry your ears into the midst of the people, hear what is said."

He was impaled and questioned in the torture chamber.

" Why did you desire his Majesty's death ? "

" I wished for it in order that Tsarevitch Alexis might come to the throne ; that people might breathe more freely, and that Petersburg might disappear," answered Demid.

He denounced the Tsaritsa's brother, Abraham Lopoukhin : the latter was also arrested and tortured at the same time with Demid. Lopoukhin received fifteen, Demid nineteen blows with the knout ; both confessed that they wished for the Tsar's death and the accession of Alexis. Demid also denounced Tsarevna Marya, the Tsar's sister.

" The Tsarevna was wont to say, ' After the Tsar's death I will gladly help the Tsarevitch with all my strength to serve the people, and govern the country.' She too it was who said, ' How can you bishops tolerate the Tsar's having married again during the lifetime of his first wife ; he ought to take back the former Tsaritsa and live with her, or else he ought to die ! ' When he, Demid, came to see her after having sworn his oath of allegiance to the young Peter in

the Church, she said to him, ' It is wrong of the Tsar to put aside his eldest son and carry everything over to his youngest son, who is only two years old, while the other is a grown man. ' "

The Tsarevna denied these things, but they confronted her in the question chamber with Demid ; there she confessed all.

The inquiry lasted more than a month. Peter was almost always present at the interrogation, watched the executioners, at times even himself helped in the work. But in spite of all his efforts he did not find what he sought, the real thing, " the root of the revolt." In the statements of the Tsarevitch and in those of all the other witnesses there was nothing but words, tales, gossipings, the ravings of madmen and fools, the grumblings of old idiots in the corners of convents. Sometimes he felt that after all he would have done better to have passed it over contemptuously, and pardon every one. But he could not stay things now, and he foresaw that he would be brought to the murder of his son.

During all this time the Tsarevitch was strictly guarded in the Palace of Preobrazhensky not far from the General Courts and the prisons. Day and night he heard, or thought he heard, the cries of the tortured. He was constantly being confronted with some prisoner. More horrible than all was the meeting with his mother. The Tsarevitch had heard that the Tsar had flogged her with his own hands.

Nearly every evening Alexis was stupefied with drink. The Court doctor Areskin told him he would end in delirium tremens. But when he stopped drinking he fell into such a melancholy that he hastened to drown his senses afresh. Areskin warned the Tsar of the danger Alexis ran. Peter replied.

" Let him perish, it's the best thing he can do ! A dog should have a dog's death ! "

Besides, of late brandy no longer brought forgetfulness to the Tsarevitch ; it only replaced the tragic reality by nightmares more horrible still. Not only his sleep but his waking hours were full of visions. He lived a double life, in which dreams and reality mingled and became indistinguishable.

Unpleasant

One time he dreamt that his father was flogging his mother in the torture chamber: he hears the hiss of the knout and the horrible dull sound of the blows on the bare flesh ; he sees the dark violet stripes on the pale body ; he replies to the cries of his mother by a still more terrible cry, and falls unconscious.

Or else he feels ready to avenge his mother, himself, and all those who have suffered. He awakes in bed at night, takes a razor from under his pillow, and in his nightshirt prowls through the dark corridors of the Palace. He steps over an orderly who sleeps on the threshold, enters his father's room, leans over him, feels for his throat and cuts it. He feels that the blood runs cold as from a dead body. Frightened he breaks off and hurries away without looking back.

Another time he hears the words of Scripture concerning Judas, "He went out and hanged himself." He slips out into a closet under the staircase where all kinds of rubbish are stored, mounts on an old three-legged chair which he props up with a box, fastens a rope used for a lantern to a hook in the ceiling, makes a running noose, puts it round his neck, and before pushing the chair away tries to cross himself ; he cannot do it, his hand refuses to move.

Suddenly, he can't tell whence, a large black cat jumps to his feet, rubs, purrs, arches his back and standing up on his hind legs, puts his forepaws on Alexis' shoulders. It is no longer a cat but a gigantesque animal. And the Tsar-evitch recognizes in the animal's face, a human face, wide jaw bones, protruding eyes, rough moustache. He tries to escape from his embrace, but the animal, throwing him down, plays with him like a mouse ; now gripping, now releasing, now caressing, now scratching. Suddenly he fastens his claws into Alexis' heart. He recognizes him of whom it is said, "They worshipped the Beast saying, 'Who is like unto the Beast, who is able to make war with him ?'"

CHAPTER IV

ON Sunday, March 2, the service in the Church of the Assumption was conducted by the newly appointed Bishop of Pskoff, Feofan Prokopovitch.

Only the nobility and officials were admitted.

Near one of the four huge pillars, covered with frescoes of dark faces on dim gold, which support the dome, under the canopy where the ancient Tsars of Muscovy had prayed, stood Peter. Near him was Alexis.

The Tsarevitch looked at Feofan, and to his mind came all he had heard about him.

Feofan had taken the place of Theodosius, who had grown old and latterly more inclined to melancholy. It was Feofan who had devised the decree which ordered that crimes revealed in confession should be reported. He also had compiled the Ecclesiastical Statute which was to guide the institution of the Holy Synod.

The Tsarevitch eyed the new Bishop with curiosity; he was a Tcherkass by birth, a Little Russian, about thirty years old, ruddy, with a shining face, glossy black beard, and large glossy moustaches; he looked very much like a huge beetle. When he laughed his whiskers moved like the horns of a beetle. From this smile alone it could be guessed that he enjoyed the coarse Latin jokes, the jests of Poggio, no less than the greasy galoushas (small dumplings) of his native place; and sharp dialectic as much as good brandy.

Notwithstanding his clerical dignity, a kind of intense merriment, bordering on intoxication, trembled and flitted almost imperceptibly across his face. He was drunk with his own intelligence, this red-cheeked Silenus in a bishop's robe. "O head, my head, that hast been drunk with

knowledge, where wilt thou rest now ? ” he used to say in his moments of candour.

And the Tsarevitch wondered with what is called in the Book of Revelation “a great wonder,” at the idea that this mendicant, this runaway “Uniate,” or advocate of the Union of the Greek and Roman Churches, who had taken Roman vows, this pupil first of Jesuits, then of Protestants, and then of Atheistic philosophers, maybe an atheist himself, was compiling the Spiritual ordinance on which depended the fate of the Russian Church.

When the archdeacon of the Cathedral had pronounced the usual anathema against all heretics and apostates, from Arius down to Gregory Otrepieff and Mazeppa, the bishop mounted on the ambo and gave a discourse on the power and honour of the Tsar.

The oration set forth what was to be the corner-stone of the Holy Synod: the Sovereign as the head of the Church.

“The teacher of nations, the Apostle Paul, proclaims that *‘there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.’* Truly these are wonderful words! I am almost tempted to say that Paul was sent by the Emperors themselves, so assiduously does he exhort, repeating again and again, ‘Power comes from God, from God alone.’ I beseech every one to consider, what more could a faithful minister of the Tsar say? Let us add, as a crown to this exhortation, the names and titles befitting those who have the highest power, which are a fairer endowment to Tsar than purple and diadems. What titles? what names are these? Autocrats are termed gods and Christs. Because of the power given by God, they are called gods, that is representatives of God on earth. Their other name is Christ, which means ‘anointed,’ because of that ancient ceremony when the Tsars are anointed with oil. Paul further says, ‘Servants, obey your Masters as ye obey Christ!’ Hence the Apostle made the masters equal to Christ. But what is most astonishing and clothes this truth with adamant armour—it cannot be overlooked: the Scriptures demand obedience, not only to good lords but also to those who are wicked, faithless and godless. Everybody knows the words. ‘*Fear God, honour the king. Servants, be*

subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle but also to the froward.' And David the prophet, himself a king, calls Saul, though impious and rejected by God, 'the anointed of the Lord.' He says, 'Seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.' But you will say, Whatever Saul may have been, nevertheless he was anointed king by God's special order, and therefore found worthy of that honour. Good; but tell me who was Cyrus of Persia, who Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon? Yet God Himself, by the prophets, calls them 'His anointed,' or, according to David, 'Christs of the Lord.' Who was Nero, the Roman Emperor? Yet the Apostle Peter exhorts obedience even to this cruel persecutor of the Christians, as to the anointed, 'The Lord's Christ.' One doubtful point remains: are all men bound by this obedience to sovereigns? are not some exempt from it, especially the clergy and monks? This is a thorn, or rather a fang—the fang of the serpent. This is the Papal idea! The clergy has a separate rank among the people, but not a separate kingdom. Every one to his own business; the military, civil officers, doctors, merchants, the different artisans, all have their duties; so also pastors and all clergy have their own appointed duty, to serve God; but at the same time they are subject to the rulers and powers. In the old Jewish Church the Levites were in all things subject to the king of Israel. If this were so in the Old Testament why should it not be the same in the New? The law about authority is unchangeable [and eternal, and has existed since the world began.]

Then came the conclusion:—

"All ye people of Russia, not only laity, but clergy, must honour your Autocrat, the most pious Peter Alexeyevitch, as your head, father of your country, and Christ of the Lord!"

The last words he uttered in a sonorous voice, looking straight at the Tsar, and raising his hand towards the vaulted roof, where a dark painting of the face of Christ stood out on a dim golden background.

The Tsarevitch, listening to his convenient doctrine, wondered with a great wonder.

Since all Tsars, even the impious, are "Christs of God," so also presumably would be the last and the greatest of

them, he who will come, the Tsar of the world—the Anti-christ ?

A blasphemy had been uttered ! by a prelate of the Orthodox Church in the oldest cathedral of Moscow, in the presence of Tsar and people ; yet the earth had not opened to engulf the blasphemer ; no fire from heaven had fallen upon him !

Everything remained calm ; above the slanting sheaves of sunbeams, above the azure clouds of incense, the face of Christ in the centre of the dome seemed to ascend to the skies, inaccessible, remote.

The Tsarevitch glanced at his father. He was quite calm and listened with pious attention.

Encouraged by this attention, Feofan concluded solemnly :

“ Rejoice, O Russia, be proud and thankful ! Let all thy cities and frontiers be glad, for on thy horizon, like a radiant sun, rises the flame of the Tsar’s son, the three-year-old infant, Peter Petrovitch, the heir designed by God. May he live happily, may he reign prosperously, Peter the Second, Peter the Blessed ! Amen.”

When Feofan had ended, a voice, weak but clear, came out of the crowd :—

“ Lord, save, keep and bestow thy grace upon the only true heir to the Russian throne, the most pious Tsarevitch, Alexis Petrovitch.”

The crowd shuddered as one man, and remained motionless, terror-struck. Then it began to grow noisy and restless.

“ Who is it ? who is it ? ”

“ A madman, no doubt ! ”

“ One possessed ! ”

“ What are the guards about ! How has he got in ! ”

“ He ought to be arrested at once, else he will escape ; it will be impossible to find him in the crowd.”

At the far end of the Church, where nothing had been either seen or heard, the wildest rumours were spreading.

“ A revolt, a revolt ! ”

“ Fire ! the altar has caught fire ! ”

“ A man with a knife has been arrested ; he wanted to murder the Tsar ! ”

The alarm increased.

Without paying any attention to what was going on, Peter approached the prelate, kissed the crucifix, and, returning to his place, ordered the speaker of these "frantic words" to be brought before him.

Captain Skorniakoff-Pissareff and two sergeants led before the Tsar a small, frail old man.

The old man handed a paper to the Tsar; it was a printed copy of the oath of allegiance to the new heir.

At the bottom, on the space left for the signature, something was written in a compact, florid clerk's handwriting.

Peter glanced at the paper, then at the old man and asked :

"Who are you?"

"Larion Dokoukin, late clerk in the arsenal."

The Tsarevitch, who stood close by, at once recognized him; it was the same Dokoukin whom he had met at Petersburg in the spring of 1715 at St. Simon's Church, and who had been to his house the day of the Venus Festival in the Summer Garden.

He had remained the same common clerk, one of those who are termed "inky souls," pettifoggers, hard, fossilized, dull and colourless, like the papers over which he had pored in his office for thirty years, at the end of which he had been dismissed for accepting bribes. And in his eyes there gleamed, just as three years ago, his fixed idea.

Dokoukin in his turn glanced stealthily at Alexis. The expression which flitted across the man's hard features, reminded the Tsarevitch of their interview; how Dokoukin had begged him "zealously to work for the Christian Faith," how he had wept, embraced his knees and called him, "Russia's hope."

"Do you refuse to swear allegiance?" said Peter calmly, as if surprised.

Dokoukin, looking straight at the Tsar, in the same low clear voice, which could be heard all over the Church, repeated by heart what he had written on the printed paper.

"I neither recognize the Tsarevitch Peter to be the legitimate heir, nor will I swear allegiance to him on the holy Gospels or by kissing the crucifix, on account of the unmerited dispossession and expulsion from the Russian

throne of the only legitimate heir, Lord Alexis Petrovitch ! May God keep him ! Though the Tsar's wrath should smite me for this, I cannot otherwise, may the will of my God and Lord Jesus Christ be done. Amen, Amen, Amen ! ”

Peter looked at him with yet greater amazement. And the whole building, crowded with the dignitaries of this world, listened in dead silence.

“ Do you know that such disobedience to our will means death ! ”

“ I know it, Sovereign ; I came with the view of suffering for Christ's sake,” replied Dokoukin simply.

“ You are brave, old man ! Let us see, however, what you will say when you are at the gallows ! ”

Dokoukin crossed himself silently and deliberately.

“ Did you hear,” continued the Tsar, “ what the bishop has said just now about subjection to the higher powers ? There is no power but from God ! ”

“ I heard it, Lord ; *‘ The powers that be are ordained by God, and what is not of God, is no power. ’* But it is not befitting to call impious Tsars and Antichrists, ‘ the anointed of the Lord, ’ and he who says it ought to have his tongue torn out ! ”

“ *Do you consider me Antichrist ?* ” asked Peter, with a tinge of sadness and a smile which was almost kind. “ Speak the truth ! ”

The old man looked down at first, but the next moment he raised his head and looked straight at the Tsar.

“ I believe thee to be the most pious, orthodox Tsar, Autocrat of all the Russias, the Lord's anointed,” he declared in a firm voice.

“ If so, you should do as we wish and hold your tongue.”

“ Lord Tsar, your Majesty, hold my tongue, even if I would, it were impossible ; I burn inwardly like a flame ; my conscience urges me on, I cannot bear it. If we remained silent the stones would cry out.”

He fell at the Tsar's feet.

“ Lord Peter Alexeyevitch, little Father, listen to us miserable folk ! We dare not change or alter anything, but in the same way as thy parents, forefathers and the holy patriarchs worked out their salvation, we too want to be saved, and to reach the heavenly Jerusalem. In

the name of God, seek the truth ; in the name of Jesus seek the truth ! For the sake of thy own salvation seek the truth ! Pacify the Holy Church, thy mother. Judge us without wrath and anger ! Show mercy unto thy people, show mercy to the Tsarevitch ! ”

At first Peter listened attentively and even with curiosity, as though trying to understand.

But after a while he turned away, in weariness shrugging his shoulders :—

“ Enough ! Enough ! It is impossible to hear all you have to say, old man. No doubt I have hanged too few of you fools. What are you aiming at ? What do you want ? Do you imagine I revere God’s Church and believe in Christ my Saviour less than you do ? And who set you slaves to judge between Tsar and God ? How dare you ! ”

Dokoukin rose and lifted his eyes up to the dark face in the vaulted roof of the Church. A ray of sunshine surrounded as with an aureola his blanched head.

“ How do we dare, Tsar ? ” he exclaimed in a loud voice. “ Listen, your Majesty. It is said in the Holy Scriptures, ‘ What is man, that Thou art mindful of him ? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him ? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands ; thou hast put all things under his feet. ’ ”

“ Thus it is that God has ordained man to be lord of himself, self-ruling ; ordainer and arbiter of his own actions. He is to be self-controlled ! What hast thou made of him ? ”

Slowly, as though with an effort, Peter averted his eyes from Dokoukin. On leaving he turned to Tolstoi, who stood close at hand, saying :—

“ Take him to the prison and keep him under strict watch until the inquiry. ”

The old man was seized ; he struggled, crying that he had still more to say. He was bound and carried off.

“ O secret martyrs ! fear not ! neither despair ! ” he continued to shout, looking at Alexis. “ Bear patiently yet a little while, for the Lord’s sake. He is coming, He will not be slow. Even so ! Come, Lord Jesus ! Amen. ”

The Tsarevitch, pale and trembling, stood listening and gazing at the scene.

"That man is, as I should be!" said he to himself, now only understanding the whole of his past life. Something was changed, transformed within his soul; what till now had been a weight became wings. Well knew he that he should fall back into weakness, melancholy, despair, but he also knew that he should forget no more what he had just for the first time fully understood.

He, too, like Dokoukin, raised his eyes to the dark image in the dome. And it seemed to him, in the slanting rays of the sun, and the blue clouds of the incense, the gigantic Face was moving, no longer receding from the earth as before, but descending, coming down nearer from heaven; the Lord Himself was approaching at last.

With joy akin to fearfulness he repeated, "Even so! Come, Lord Jesus! Amen."

CHAPTER V

THE Moscow inquiry ended on March 15. The verdict of the Tsar and ministers, given in the supreme court of Preobrajzhenskoye, sealed the fate of the culprits.

The ex-Tsaritsa, Sister Helen, was to be sent to Old Ladoga and there shut up in a convent, the Tsarevna Marya to Schlüsselbourg ; both to be rigorously confined and closely watched. Abraham Lapoukhin was taken to the Peter and Paul fortress at Petersburg to await a fresh inquiry. The others were to suffer death.

The executions began that same morning on the Red Square. The iron pikes, on which had remained for twenty years the heads of the Streltzi, decapitated in 1698, were cleaned and made ready to receive other heads.

Stephen Gleboff, the Tsaritsa's lover, was impaled. He was seated on a small board. The iron spike issued from his skull. To prevent his freezing, and to prolong his tortures as much as possible, he was given a fur coat and cap. There priests watched him day and night, in the hope that he would reveal some secret before his death. One of them reported : " From the moment that Stephen was impaled, he confessed nothing to us ; all he did was to ask the arch-monk Marcellus to give him the communion secretly ; and while receiving it he gave up the ghost, on March 16, eight hours after midnight, during the second watch."

Demid, the unfrocked Bishop of Rostoff, was broken on the wheel. It was said that the secretary, to whom the execution had been entrusted, made a mistake. Instead of having the bishop beheaded and his body burnt, he had him broken on the wheel.

Kikin suffered the same death. He was tortured slowly, at intervals ; his legs and arms were broken one after the other ; his torture lasted for more than twenty-four hours.

His agony was increased by the fact that he had been roped so tightly to the wheel that he could not move in the least: he cried and moaned, praying to be finished off. It is reported that the Tsar, passing by on horseback, stooped down towards him and said:

"Alexander, you are an intelligent man. How came it that you dared to take part in such an affair?"

"Intelligence loves space, and you, you stifle it!" Kikin is supposed to have answered.

The third to suffer on the wheel was the ex-Tsaritsa's confessor, Theodore Poustinni, who had been an intermediary between her and Gleboff.

Those who escaped death, had their noses and tongues slit, or nostrils torn off. Several, who had only heard about the Tsaritsa's seclusion and had seen her in secular dress, were pitilessly flogged!

On the Square a white stone pillar was erected six feet high, flanked with iron spikes; the heads of the victims were stuck on these spikes. The pillar was crowned by a large flat slab, bodies were laid on it, among them Gleboff's, surrounded as it were by his accomplices.

The Tsarevitch was forced to be present at all these executions.

Larion Dokoukin was the last to be broken on the wheel. When roped to it, he declared he had something to communicate to the Tsar. He was unbound and taken to Preobrajenskoye. When the Tsar came up to him, he was already in delirium, muttering something about the coming Christ. Then for a moment he seemed to recover consciousness, looked steadfastly at the Tsar, and said:—

"If you put your son to death, his blood will fall on you and on all your descendants, from father to son, to the last of the Tsars. Have pity on your son! have pity on Russia!"

Peter said nothing, left him, and ordered his head to be cut off.

On the day after the executions, the eve of Peter's departure for Petersburg, a midnight orgie of the "Most Drunken Convocation" was to be held at Preobrajenskoye.

In these bloody days, just as during the Streltzi executions and all the blackest days of his life, Peter more zeal-

ously than ever gave himself up to buffoonery, as if trying to deafen himself with the sound of laughter.

A new Kniaz-Pope Peter Ivanovitch Bourtourline, "Metropolitan of St. Petersburg," had been recently elected in place of the late Nikita Zotoff. The election of the "Priest, Imitator of Bacchus," had taken place at Petersburg, his consecration at Moscow, on the very eve of the Tsarevitch's arrival. Now at Preobrajzhenskoye the enrobing of the newly elected pope was to take place in mitre and cassock, burlesques of the patriarchal robes.

The Tsar found time during the legal inquiry to draw up the entire programme for this ribald ceremony.

The midnight orgie or "service" took place in a large wooden hall, hung with red cloth, illuminated with wax tapers, close to the court of judgment and the torture chamber. The long narrow tables were arranged in the shape of a horse-shoe. In the centre was a raised platform with steps on which were seated the chief cardinals, priests, and other members of the convocation. A throne, surmounted by a velvet canopy, was built of casks, and decorated from top to bottom with bottles and glasses.

When all were assembled the sacristan and the cardinal archdeacon—no other than the Tsar himself—solemnly brought in the new pope. Before him were borne two huge flasks of "very strong wine," one gilt, the other silvered, and two dishes, one with cucumbers, the other with cabbage, finally, an obscene *icon*, the naked Bacchus. The Kniaz-Pope, bowing thrice to the prince-caesar and to the cardinals, offered to his Majesty the flasks and the dishes.

The Archimage questioned the pope.

"Why have you come, and what do you require from our Intemperance?"

"To be arrayed in the robes of our father Bacchus," answered the pope.

"How do you keep the laws of Bacchus, and what are your merits in that respect?"

"O, Most Drunken Father! On rising, while yet dark, before the break of dawn, sometimes even about midnight, I drink two, three bumpers of wine, and during the day I employ myself in the same way, and fill my belly

with various drinks, like a barrel. So it happens that the trembling of my hand and the darkness which fills my eyes prevents me from finding my mouth when I try to eat. This is what I do, and this is what I promise to teach to those entrusted to me. And all those who think differently and wage war against drink I will as strangers utterly deny and anathematize. Amen ! ”

The Archimage proclaimed :—

“ May the drunkenness of Bacchus, which passeth all understanding, in complete lack of steadiness, uprightness, and sanity be with thee all the days of thy life ! ”

The cardinals led the pope on to the platform, and arrayed him in vestments ; burlesque imitations of the cassocks, omophorium, stole, and epigonation, embroidered with dice, cards, bottles, pipes and nude figures of Venus and Bacchus. Instead of a panagia, clay flasks with bells were hung round the neck, the book-cask, containing flasks of various kinds of vodka, and a cross of pipes were handed to him, He was anointed on the head and round the eyes with strong wine.

“ So may your head go round and circles dance in various shapes before your eyes henceforth unto the end of your life.”

Both his hands and the four fingers which held the bumper were then anointed.

“ So may your hands tremble all the days of your life.”

In conclusion the Archimage set a tin mitre on his head.

“ May this crown of the mistiness of Bacchus ever remain on your head ! I a drunkard crown this toper :—

In the name of all drunkards,
In the name of every bottle,
In the name of all the fools,
In the name of all buffoons,
In the name of all the grapes,
In the name of all the hops,
In the name of all the casks,
In the name of all the hogs,
In the name of all tobacco,
In the name of all pothouses,
Homes of our father Bacchus.

Amen.”

The assembly shouted :

“Axios !—He is worthy.”

The pope was then enthroned on the barrels. Just above his head hung a small silver Bacchus astride of a cask. Bending it towards himself the pope conveniently could draw brandy either into his glass or straight into his mouth.

Not only the members of the convocation but all the other guests approached His Holiness in their turn. They bowed low before him and received, instead of a blessing, a blow on their head with a pig's bladder soaked in brandy, and then partook of the pepper brandy offered in a huge wooden spoon.

The priests chanted :—

“O most honourable father Bacchus, born of the burnt Semele, reared in Jupiter's thigh, dispenser of the joys of the Vine ! We call on thee in the company of all this most drunken assembly. Multiply and direct the steps of this world-wide-ruling prince-pope so that he may walk in thy ways. And thou, most glorious Venus——”

Here followed obscene adjurations.

At last the guests sat down to table. Opposite the prince-pope sat the real chief ecclesiastic ; Feofan Prokopovitch had taken his place, Peter next to him, then Theodosius ; Alexis sat opposite the Tsar his father.

The Tsar began talking over with Feofan the news which had just reached them of the thousands of Raskolniks who had burnt themselves alive in the forests of Kerjenetz and Tchernoramensk, near the Volga. The drunken songs and shouts of the buffoons hindered the conversation.

At a sign from Peter the priests stopped short in their chant in honour of Bacchus ; all were hushed, and in this sudden silence Feofan's voice was heard saying :—

“What cursed madmen, what frantic martyrs ! insatiable in the vanity of their desire for torture ! They throw themselves into the flames of their own free will, flinging themselves recklessly into the abyss of hell, showing others the way. To call them mad were too little ; there is no adequate name for such an evil ! May all disown them and spit on them.”

"But what can be done with them?" asked Peter.

"It ought to be explained to them, your Majesty, in an exhortation, that not every suffering is acceptable before God, but only suffering ordained by law. For the Lord does not simply say, 'Blessed are the persecuted,' but, 'Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.' And such persecution for righteousness' sake can never threaten Russia, which is an orthodox country; it is impossible for such a thing to happen——"

"Explain to them?" cried the superseded Theodosius, with a malicious smile, "of what use in the world would that be? The jaws of apostates should be broken. If in the Old Testament it was ordained that rebels must be put to death, how much is this so in the New Testament, where direct truth takes the places of images and shadows? Better is it for heretics themselves, better to die; to kill them is an act of kindness; the longer they live the more they sin, and the more seductions they invent to mislead. There is not much difference between killing a sinner with weapons or with prayer."

"That is a bad argument," calmly replied Feofan, without looking at Theodosius. "Cruelty is more liable to exasperate than to subdue folks bent on being martyrs. People must be brought to the Church, not by force and fear, but by the charity of the Gospels."

"True, true," agreed Peter; "we do not wish to hinder freedom of conscience, and gladly leave each individual to work out his own salvation. In my opinion let every man believe what he pleases; if arguments fail to convert him, fire and sword will prove utterly useless. And the maniacs for martyrdom neither benefit the country, nor themselves receive the crown of glory."

"Slow and sure, everything will settle itself by degrees," rejoined Feofan. "Nevertheless," he added in a subdued voice, leaning over to the Tsar, "it would be as well to impose a double tax on the Raskolniks, so as to bring back to the Holy Church those who are afraid of fines. Also, when punishment is inflicted, some obvious civil transgression, other than their heresy, should be found, and then, having flogged them and torn their nostrils, they should, according to law, be sent to the galleys; yet when there

is no obvious civil fault exhortations alone should be resorted to."

Peter acquiesced with a nod. The Tsar and the priest understood each other.

Theodosius looked as if he would reply, but said nothing; a sarcastic smile distorted his little face, which resembled the snout of a bat, and he shrank back into himself, green with rage, as if he had taken poison. Well he understood what "exhortation" meant. Pitirime, the bishop sent to Kerjenetz to convert the Raskolniks, had only recently reported to the Emperor: "They have been tortured with exceeding cruelty; even their entrails came out." And the Tsar in his ukase forbade that father Pitirime should be blamed for his "apostolic work." It is easy to speak about love, but in reality, as the Raskolniks complained, "Dumb teachers stand in the torture chambers, in their hands they hold the knout instead of the Gospels, and fire takes the place of Apostles to instruct them."

This was, however, the same ecclesiastical policy of dissimulation Theodosius himself had been preaching; but Feofan had out-run him and he felt his reign was over.

"There is nothing to be astonished at," continued the prelate in a loud voice, "if uncultured peasants, in their extreme ignorance, err from the right way and commit mad acts. What is astonishing is that among the great nobles, among the Tsar's servants, some are to be found, who in their wisdom and feigned humility are worse than Raskolniks. It has come so far that even the most worthless insolently take part in vile actions. Already the scum of the people, unprincipled men, born for nothing else than to be fed by the labour of others, rise up against their Tsar, against the Lord's Christ. When they receive their daily bread, they ought to wonder and say, 'Whence cometh this to us?' The story of King David is repeating itself; David, against whom the blind and lame rebelled. Our pious monarch who has done so much for Russia, by whose providence all have received security and honour, has only earned himself a bad name, and his life is full of sorrows. Having prematurely aged himself by hard toil, and when unmindful of his health, thinking only of the

country's welfare, he is rushing, as it were, on to his death, there are yet those who say, 'He lives too long.' O sorrow, shame on thee, thee, O Russia! let us beware lest the whole world say of us: 'The Tsar is worthy of such an empire, but the people are unworthy of such a Tsar.'"

When Feofan had finished, Peter said:—

"God, who sees my heart and conscience, knows how dear to me is my country's welfare. But the diabolic work against me. Never has a ruler been confronted with so many attacks and calamities as I have. Foreigners say I govern slaves. But English freedom is out of place here. It would do as much good as peas thrown against a fortress wall. You must first know a people before you can decide how to govern them. It is difficult for any one to judge me who does not know everything. God alone knows the truth. He is my judge—"

Nobody listened to the Tsar. All were drunk. He stopped without having said all he meant to say, made a sign, and the priests resumed the hymn to Bacchus, the fools began shouting. The "Spring Chorus," imitating the different birds, from the nightingale to the warbler, was so piercing that the walls re-echoed with its shrill noise.

Everything went on as usual. The guests drank and ate till they lost their senses. The dignitaries fought, pulled one another's hair, and then making peace rolled together under the table. Prince Shakhovskoi, knight of the burlesque order of Judas, received for money, boxes on the ear. An old boyar, who refused to drink, had brandy poured down his throat through a funnel. The Kniaz-Pope vomited, from the height of his throne, over the wigs and coats of those sitting under him. The drunken fool, the princess-abbess Rjevski, danced skittishly, catching hold of the bottom of her skirts, and sang in a husky voice:—

Shin, shen shivargen !
Once, once, again !
Speed, speed, speed, round,
Burn ! burn !

The guests whistled and stamped in time, making a frightful dust.

Everything was just as usual. Yet Peter felt weary of it all. He drank as much as possible of the strongest English pepper and brandy on purpose to get drunk. Yet he did not succeed. The more he drank, the more weary he became. He rose, sat down, rose again; he wandered among the bodies of drunken guests, strewn like corpses on a battlefield, and could not find rest. His heart began to beat in mortal anguish. Should he run away, or should he drive away this rabble?

When the cold cheerless light of the winter morn mingled with the stinking gloom and the dim light of candles burnt-down, the human faces grew yet more hideous, more beast-like, monstrous, fantastic.

Peter's gaze was arrested by his son's face.

The Tsarevitch was drunk. His face was deadly pale. The long thin tufts of hair stuck to his sweaty brow, his eyes had grown dim, his lower jaw hung down. He was trying not to spill his wine, but the fingers which held the glass trembled like those of an inveterate drunkard.

"Wine is not like grain, once spilt it can't be picked up," he muttered raising his glass. He drank it, made a face, cleared his throat, and wanting to take the taste away by a salted mushroom, vainly sought to catch one with the fork. He did not succeed, gave it up, took a piece of black bread and began to chew it slowly.

"Dear friend, am I drunk? tell me the truth, am I drunk?" he repeatedly asked Tolstoi who was sitting close by.

"Drunk, quite," asserted Tolstoi.

"Now that's all right," continued the Tsarevitch, hardly able to move his thick tongue. "What does it matter to me? As long as I don't taste wine, I have no craving whatever for it; but once I taste it, were it only a glass, I am lost. I can't refuse whenever it is offered. It's well I am not violent when drunk."

He laughed a low drunken laugh and suddenly turned to his father.

"Daddy, daddy, why are you so sad? Come here, let us have a drink together! I will sing to you a song. You will be more cheerful, really!"

He smiled at his father, and there was something familiar, sweet and childlike in that smile.

"An imbecile, a simpleton! How is it possible to kill such a one!" thought Peter, and suddenly a wild, terrible pity clutched his heart like a beast.

He turned away, pretending to be listening to Feofan, who was telling him about the establishment of his Holy Synod, yet heard nothing. At last he called an orderly and told him to get horses ready to start at once for Petersburg; meanwhile he again began striding up and down, weary and sober, among the drunkards. Unconsciously, as though drawn by some magnet, he approached the Tsarevitch and sat down next to him, but turned his head, pretending to be engrossed in a conversation with Prince James Dolgorouki.

"Daddy, daddy," the Tsarevitch gently touched his father's hand. "Why are you so sad? Does he offend you? Ram a pike down his throat! that'll finish him."

"Who is *he*?" Peter turned to his son.

"How do I know, who *he* is?" answered Alexis with a smile which made even Peter shudder. "All I know is that now you are yourself again, and that other, the devil knows who he is, a mere pretender, a beast, a were-wolf——"

"Alexis, Alexis, what's the matter with you?" Peter looked closely at him. "You should drink less."

"Whether I drink or not, die I must! Better, then, drink and die! For you also it will be better if I die; it will save you killing me," and again he grinned, quite like a fool, and suddenly began singing in a low, scarcely audible voice, which seemed to come from a distance:—

A maiden, I will wander
Through the fields of peace.
And there blue flowers I'll gather,
For the blue flowers are his:
And coming back towards the river,
Into a wreath my spoil I'll twine,
And throw this little wreath of mine
To the stream, remembering my lover.

"I had a dream lately, daddy; Afrossinia was sitting at night on a snow-covered field; naked and sad to look at, as though dead, and she was rocking a babe which also

seemed dead. She was singing with tears in her voice this very song :

It sinks, it sinks, does my blue wreath !
It sinks, sinks, does my heart's breath !
The flowers have gone to their death
With him, who was my light !

Peter listened, and pity, wild, terrible, cruel pity, gnawed at his heart like some fierce beast.

The Tsarevitch sang and wept. Then he laid his head on the table, knocking over the wine glass. A blood-red stain spread on the tablecloth. He put his hand under his head, closed his eyes, and fell asleep.

Peter gazed for a long time at this pale lifeless face resting on the blood-red stain.

The orderly entered and announced that the horses were ready. Peter got up, he glanced for the last time at his son, bent over him and kissed his brow. The Tsarevitch did not open his eyes, yet in his sleep he smiled at his father with just that tender smile, as when a child the father used to take him in his arms asleep.

The Tsar left the hall unnoticed. The orgie continued. He took his place in the carriage and started off for Petersburg.

Book IX.

The Red Death

CHAPTER I

IN the forest along the Vetlougá there stood a Raskolnik settlement of the "Old Believers" called "the Bank of Mosses." The roads leading to it were impassable on account of the swamps. It was not an easy task to get there in summer, along the narrow raised paths, which led through thickets quite dark even in the day time. In winter it was accessible on snow shoes.

According to the legend of its origin, three monks from the forests of Olonetz, near the lake Tolveoye, had come here after the destruction of their monastery by the Nikonians; they had followed the lead of a miraculous icon of the Virgin, which had gone before them, suspended in the air. On the spot where the icon descended to the earth they built a hut, and began to live the austere life of hermit monks. They tilled the ground and, burning down the wood along the ridges, sowed rye-corn among the ashes. Disciples collected around them. When the three old men died, they did so on the same day, at the same hour, saying to their disciples: "Children, continue living in this blessed retreat. You may roam far and wide but you will not come across another refuge like it. It has been predestined for the foundation of a large and glorious monastery."

The prophecy was fulfilled; the settlement grew in the

thickly wooded dale, like a lily of Paradise under the protection of the Virgin.

"A miracle !" cried the settlers. "Holy Russia has grown dark while the gloomy regions of the Vetlougá have become radiant ; the desert has been peopled with saints who have assembled there like the six-winged seraphim." It was here that, after long roaming in the forests of Kerjenetz and Tchernoramensk, Father Cornelius, the prophet of the Red Death, and his disciple the runaway Tichon Zapolsky, son, as the reader will remember, of a Streletz rebel, had taken up their abode.

One night in June, not far from the settlement, on a steep rock overhanging the river, a fire was burning. The flames lit up the lower branches of a pine to whose trunk an old Raskolnik's brass icon was nailed. Two persons were sitting near the fire ; the young girl-novice Sophia, and the lay brother Tichon. Sophia had been in the wood searching for a young calf which had strayed ; Tichon was returning from a distant hermitage, whither Cornelius had sent him with a letter. They had met by chance at the crossing of the two paths, late at night, when the gates of the monastery were closed ; and they decided to await the dawn together near the fire. Sophia watching the flames was singing in a low voice :—

Christ Himself, the blessed King of Heaven,
Speaks to us His children, thus :
"Let not yourselves be conquered
By the seven-headed snake, the Evil One.
Rather flee and hide in caves and mountains,
Where build up large piles of faggots—
Pour burning sulphur over them—
And burn thereon your earthly bodies
For your glorious faith in Me !
Short your suffering, My beloved !
To reward you I will open
All my Father's Heavenly Mansions ;
I will take you into Heaven,
Where we all shall dwell together."

"So it shall be, brother," concluded the young girl, fixing on Tichon a long steady look, "he who will be burned shall be saved. It is well to burn for the love of Christ !"

Tichon remained silent. He watched the moths fluttering round the fire till they perished in the flames, and remembered Cornelius' words : " Like gnats and midgets, the more you try to kill them the more in numbers come ! So the sons of Russia shall cast themselves by thousands into the Red Death ! "

" What are you thinking about, brother ? " the girl asked. " Are you afraid of the furnace ? Courage ! Despise it ! fear not ! The pain won't last a moment ! and quick ! the body will release the soul ! The fear lasts only while waiting, but once in it all is forgotten. When it begins to burn, you will see Christ, with legions of angels, drawing the soul out of the body ; and Christ our Hope blesses the soul, endows it with a divine power, and no longer heavy, but as on wings, it flutters about with the angels, like a bird, rejoiced to have escaped its prison ! Long it had cried unto the Lord ; ' Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name.' And now what it asked for has been granted. The prison is burning in the furnace, and the soul like a pearl, like pure gold, is soaring up to the Lord ! "

Such joy shone in her eyes, that she might have been already beholding what she was describing.

" Tichon, Tichon dear, don't you wish for the Red Death, or do you dread it ? " she repeated with a caressing whisper.

" I am afraid to do wrong, Sophia. Surely it cannot be God's will that men should perish so ? Are you certain that it is not the lure of Satan ? "

" What are we to do, then ? We are driven to it by necessity ! " She clasped her thin, pale hands, the hands of a child.

" We cannot escape, we cannot hide ourselves from the dragon, neither in the mountains nor in caverns, nor in the chasms of the earth ; he hath empoisoned the earth, the water, the air. Everything is defiled, and accursed."

The night was still. The stars shone like the innocent eyes of children ; the crescent of the waning moon rested upon the black tips of the fir trees. The soothing cry of the night-jar rose through the mist from the bog below. The pine forest exhaled a dry, warm, resinous perfume.

Near the fire a lilac harebell, lit up by the red glare of the flames, bent on its stalk as if nodding its delicate, drowsy little head.

The moths continued to flutter round the fire and perish in the flames.

Tichon closed his eyes, wearied by the fire-glow. He remembered one summer's noon, that scent of the pines, in which the fresh smell of apples seemed mingled with the aroma of myrrh; a glade, sunshine, bees buzzing round clover, snail-trefoil, and pink silene; in the middle of the fine glade stood a weather-beaten, half-rotten, wooden cross, probably indicating the last resting-place of a saintly hermit. "Fair Mother Solitude"—he began to repeat his favourite poem. God had answered his prayers. He had brought him to this quiet resting-place. He knelt, and burying his head in the tall grass, kissed the ground and prayed:—

Oh, wondrous Queen, Mother of God!
Earth, thou bountiful mother of all.

and, looking up towards the sky, he continued:—

Descend, thou glorious Mother, from thy hall,
Thou wondrous Queen, mother of God.

The earth and the sky had become one. In the heavenly countenance, radiant as the sun, the countenance of the woman with glowing eyes and fiery wings, Saint Sophia, the Wisdom of God, he saw a countenance familiar to him upon earth, one he longed yet feared to recognize. He rose and went further into the wood. How long and how far he no longer remembered. At last he saw a small round lake; the steep banks covered with firs were reflected in the water like one uninterrupted green wall. The water, thick as resin, green as the pine needles, was so still it was hardly noticeable, and seemed an opening into Hades. On a stone, close to the water, sat the young novice Sophia. He recognized, and yet saw she was a stranger. She had a wreath of white flowers on her flowing hair, the black habit was a little raised, her bare white feet were dipping in the water, her eyes had a drunken look in them. And gently swaying to and fro, looking at the underground kingdom of the water, she sang a gentle song, one of those which

are sung on St. John's eve at the old revels among the bonfires:—

Loved sun, so fair and bright,
Old, old Lado! Old, old Lado!
Dear flowers bursting in the night,
Old, old Lado! Old, old Lado!
Earth, earth, fertile Mother of all.

There was something ancient and wild in this song, which recalled the sad plaintive notes of a yellow-hammer in the lifeless hush of noon before a storm. "A water nymph!" thought he, daring neither to move nor breathe. A twig snapped under his foot, The young girl turned round, shrieked, jumped off the stone and fled back to the wood. Nothing remained save the ever widening circles round the wreath which had fallen into the water. He felt terrified as if he had really witnessed a sylvan apparition, an infernal mystery. And remembering the human likeness in the heavenly countenance, he recognized Sister Sophia, and the prayer to the "Mother of all" seemed a mockery. He never confided to anybody what he had seen near the Round Lake, but the vision often returned to his mind, and in spite of all his struggles against this temptation he could not overcome it; at times even in his purest prayers he would see the human face as it were through the heavenly countenance.

And now Sophia, continuing to look at the flames with a fixed and wistful gaze, was singing about St. Cyros, the child martyr, whom the infidel king Maximian had cast into a glowing furnace.

Fair Cyros in the furnace stands,
Chanting the song of cherubim.
Green grass is growing at his feet,
Bestarred with florets blue and sweet.
He feels no fire, but with them plays,
His garment like the sun ablaze.

Tichon too was gazing at the fire, and it seemed to him he recognized the song's celestial flowers in the blue heart of the flames. Blue as the sky they seemed to promise an inexpressible blessedness; yet to reach that heaven the red flame had to be passed through.

Suddenly Sophia turned to him, laid her hand on his,

brought her face so close to his that he felt her breath come and go, ardent and passionate, like a kiss, and began to whisper in a persuasive murmur :—

“Together, together, we will burn, my brother, my beloved ! Alone I fear it ; with you it will be easy ! Together we will go to the marriage feast of the Lamb.”

She repeated with infinite tenderness in her voice, “ We will burn, we will burn ! ” Across her pale face, and in her black eyes, which reflected the glow of the flames, again there flitted that ancient, wild expression, which he had felt in her song near the Round Lake.

“ We will burn, Sophia ! ” he murmured with terror. She drew him as the flame draws a moth.

The sound of footsteps was heard on the path which led along the precipice below.

“ Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon us sinners,” said a voice.

“ Amen,” responded Tichon and Sophia.

The newcomers were pilgrims. They had lost their way in the wood, and narrowly escaped being engulfed in the bog ; perceiving the light of the fire, they had after considerable difficulty found their way to it.

They sat down round the fire.

“ Is it far to the monastery, friends ? ”

“ ’Tis just here at the foot of the hill,” answered Tichon, and looking steadfastly at the woman who put the question, he recognized Vitalia, the same who led the life of a migrant bird, roaming, flying everywhere, whom he had met two years ago in Petersburg on the oak-rafts of the Tsarevitch Alexis, on the night of the Venus festival. She too recognized Tichon and was delighted. With her was her inseparable companion Kilikeja the possessed ; the runaway recruit Petka Gisla, whose hand, branded with the government stamp, the mark of the Beast, had withered ; and the old boatman, Simple John, who, waiting for Christ’s coming, sang every night the song of the coffin-liers.

“ Whence come ye, Orthodox folk ? ” asked Sophia.

“ We are pilgrims,” answered Vitalia, “ we wander everywhere, persecuted by the heretics ; we have no abiding city, we are waiting for the New Jerusalem. We are now coming from Kerjensk. Cruel persecutions are

going on there now. Peterin, the fierce wolf, the vampire of the church, has destroyed seventy-seven monasteries and cast out the holy monks."

They began telling about the persecutions.

One old father had been flogged in three torture chambers, his ribs had been broken with iron tongues, he was dragged by the navel, and then (it was a very cold winter) he was stripped and ice-water was poured over him until icicles reached from his beard to the ground; at last he found death in the flames.

Others were tormented in iron collars, collars which draw head, hands and feet all together; with the result that the spine and the limbs were dislocated, and blood spurted from the mouth, nose, eyes and ears of the martyrs.

Others were forced to partake of the Lord's supper by having a gag put into their mouths. The soldiers dragged a youth to church, laid him on the bench, the priest and deacon approached with the vessel. He was held down, his mouth was opened and the wine poured in. He spat it out. Then the deacon dealt him such a blow with his fist, that his lower jaw was broken. The lad died from this blow.

One woman to escape the persecutions made a hole in the ice, pushed her seven small children under, and then drowned herself.

A pious husband had his pregnant wife and three children baptized and killed them that very night in their sleep. In the morning he came to the authorities and said:—

"I was the executor of my family, you will be my torturers; they suffered from me, I shall suffer from you, and together we martyrs of the Old Faith will be in heaven."

Many escaping from Antichrist sought death in the flames.

"They do well. This self-immolation is acceptable to the Lord. Even God cannot save those who fall into the hands of Antichrist. The pains are unbearable, no one can resist him. Better burn here than be cast into the eternal flames," concluded Vitalia. "Yes; there is no means of escape but by fire or water."

The stars grew dim. Pale streaks appeared among the clouds on the horizon. Through the mist, the river wind-

ing among the limitless woods glittered like dull steel. On the river bank at the foot of the precipice the monastery was slowly emerging out of the gloom. It was surrounded by a palisade which gave it the appearance of an ancient wooden fortress. A large wooden gateway, surmounted by the image of Christ, opened upon the river. Inside the palisade stood a group of buildings with raised ground floors, vestibules, corridors, closets, attics, summer rooms, turrets, watch towers with narrow windows like fortress barbicans, and steep wooden roofs. Round these clustered a smithy, a tailor's shop, a tanyard, a cobbler's shop, a hospital, a school, and a place where icons were painted. The chapel, dedicated to the Virgin of Tolvooye, was also a simple building of logs, only larger than the rest, surmounted by a wooden cross and a shingled dome; near it was the belfry which stood out black against the pale sky.

A faint plaintive sound came floating through the air; this was the summons to early mass. Instead of bells, knockers were used,—oak boards hung on ropes made of twisted ox-sinews, a huge three-sided nail being used to hammer them. Accord to tradition Noah had summoned the animals to the ark in similar fashion. In the responsive silence of the woods the sound rang singularly sweet and sad.

The pilgrims, looking towards the holy monastery, last refuge of the persecuted, crossed themselves.

"Holy, Holy, Holy New Jerusalem, may God's glory descend upon thee," chanted Kilikeja. A transfiguring joy lit up her pale, waxen face.

"All the monasteries have been destroyed; this one alone has remained untouched," remarked Vitalia; "the Queen of Heaven has evidently taken it under Her holy protection. It is written in Revelation: 'And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness.'"

"The Tsar's arm is long, but it won't reach as far as this," said one of the pilgrims.

"This is the last refuge of ancient holy Russia," concluded another.

The sound died away, all remained quiet. It was the

silent hour, when, according to tradition, the waters remain motionless, the angels pray, and the seraphim move their wings in holy awe before the throne of the Most High.

Simple John, sitting with his arm round his knees, his motionless eyes fixed on the brightening east, sang his eternal song :—

A coffin of pinewood tree
Stands ready prepared for me,
Within its narrow wall
I'll await the judgment call.

And again, as on the rafts at Petersburg on the night of the Venus festival, the talk turned upon the end of the world, and Antichrist :

“Soon, soon! He is already at the door,” began Vitalia. “Now we just manage to get along; but when Antichrist has come our lips will be sealed, and only in our hearts shall we be able to cling to God.”

“It is terrible, terrible,” moaned Kilikeya.

“I have heard,” continued Vitalia Avilka, “a runaway Cossock from the Don, relate a vision he had in the steppe : three men came to his hut, all exactly alike in countenance, they spoke Russian, but with a Greek accent. ‘Whence come ye,’ he asked, ‘and whither do ye go?’ ‘From Jerusalem,’ they answered, ‘and from the Lord’s Sepulchre to Petersburg, to see the Antichrist.’ ‘What Antichrist?’ he asked. ‘He whom you call Tsar Peter; he is the Antichrist. He will conquer Constantinople, and collect the Jews and take them to Jerusalem where he will reign. And the Jews know he is the real Antichrist. And with him has come the end of the world.’”

Again all remained silent, as though in expectation. All at once from the dark forest there came a long cry, like that of a weeping child; it probably was a night-bird. A tremor passed through them.

“Friends, friends,” stuttered Petka, his voice shaking with gasps, “I am afraid. We speak of him, the Antichrist, and perhaps he is here in the wood near us! See how we all are troubled.”

“Fools, fools, blockheads!” suddenly cried a voice like the angry growl of a bear. They turned round and

saw a man whom they had not noticed before. He had probably come out of the wood while they were talking, had sat down on one side in the shade, and had remained silent. He was a tall stooping man, with grizzled red hair. His face could hardly be discerned in the morning twilight.

"The Tsar Peter makes a poor kind of Antichrist; he is a drunkard, a vagabond, a profligate," continued the old man; "a pitiful Antichrist! The Last of the Devils will go about his work differently; he will have more brain than Peter."

"Abba, Father," prayed Vitalia, trembling with fear and curiosity, "enlighten our darkness with the light of truth. Tell us everything you know about the coming of the Son of Perdition."

The old man groaned; at last after considerable difficulty he succeeded in rising to his feet. There was something heavy, awkward, and bearlike in his whole frame. A boy led him by the hand up to the fire. Under the shrivelled touloupe or sheepskin coat, which he obviously never took off, he wore two stone slabs hung on iron chains, one in front, the other at his back. He had an iron cap on his head, round his loins an iron belt, somewhat like a hoop, to which was riveted a large ring. Tichon remembered Capitone the Great, a saint of Mourom, also had a ring like this fastened to his belt, which by means of a hook in the ceiling was all his rest. He used to sleep hanging by a rope from the hook.

The old man seated himself on the roots of a pine and turned his face eastward. In place of eyes he had two bleeding wounds. The nails which studded the inside of his cap had entered his skull, and had caused him to go blind. His whole face was terrible to look at, but his smile had remained tender as that of a child.

He began to talk, as if beholding with his blind eyes what he was describing:—

"Friends, my poor friends, what has frightened you? He himself has not yet come; nothing has either been seen or heard of him. He will have many precursors; there have been, are, and will be many. They are smoothing his way, and when they have prepared all things and

removed all obstacles then he himself will appear. He will be born of an unchaste woman, and Satan will enter into him ; and the Deceiver will in all things be like unto the Son of God : he will be chaste, meek, gentle, and kind, he will heal the sick, feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, and comfort the mourners. There will come to him those who were bidden and those who were unbidden, and they will make him ruler over all nations. And he will collect his forces from the east even unto the west ; his white sails will cover the sea, his black shields the earth. He will say : I will gather the world into my hand like a nest, and rob it as I would steal the abandoned eggs. And he will do great wonders ; move the hills, walk on the waves, bring down fire from heaven, cause devils to appear like angels of light, and armies of numberless spirits. The Prince of Darkness, radiant as the sun, will rise up to heaven and descend again upon the earth with great glory, the trumpets will sound and much crying and wondrous singing will be heard. And he will sit in the temple of God saying : ' I am God ! ' and the people will bow before him saying : ' Thou art God ; there is none other God but thee ! ' And the abomination of desolation will stand in the holy place. And then earth shall wail and the sea lift itself up in sighing ; the heavens will keep back their dew and the clouds their rain ; the sea will be filled with gloom and stench, the rivers will dry up, the sources be exhausted, and people will die from hunger and thirst. And they will come unto the Son of Perdition and say : ' Give us meat and drink,' and he will mock and insult them. And they will recognize that he is the Beast, and they will flee from his sight, yet no place will give them shelter. And darkness will compass them round. Pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them. Living beings will look like the dead ; women's beauty will fade ; man shall behold them without emotion, and man's natural force will abate. Silver and gold may be scattered in the markets, yet no one will gather it up. Men will die of their grief, they will bite their tongues and shall blaspheme the living God. The powers of the heavens shall be shaken, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven. He is coming. Even so ! Come, Lord Jesus. Amen, Amen ! "

He finished and turned his empty orbits towards the east, as if beholding on the horizon, in the towering dark clouds, steeped with blood and gold, that which was as yet withheld from the others. The fiery streaks unfurled in the sky like the fiery pinions of seraphim prostrate in the glory of the coming Lord. A glowing dazzling ball rose over the wall of the dark forest ; its rays, split by the pointed tips of the black firs, sparkled in iridescent hues. The flames of the fire grew dim before the radiance of the sun. The earth, the sky, the waters, leaves, birds, the whole creation together with the heart of man shouted with great joy, " Even so ! Come, Lord Jesus ! "

Tichon experienced his old familiar feeling ; the fear and the joy of the End.

Sophia crossed herself at the first appearance of the sun, invoking the baptism of fire, the eternal sun, the Red Death. But Simple John alone remained sitting as before, his arms clasped round his knees. He gently swayed to and fro, and looking towards the east, the dawn of day, he sang about the last setting, the end of days :—

Ye hollowed oak-trunks, ye will prove
Fit house for us who on earth do move ;
Night approacheth, endeth Day,
And Death his scythe doth lay
To the root of all that live. . . .

CHAPTER II

A MEETING of the brethren had been convoked at the monastery to discuss Avakoum's controversial epistles.

The zealous priest had sent to his friend the old Monk Sergius in Kershenetz a letter relating to the Holy Trinity, with the superscription :—

“Receive, Sergius, this eternal Gospel, written not by my hand, but by God's.”

He asserted that the substance of the Holy Trinity is divided into three co-equal distinct natures. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, each have their separate place, sitting on three thrones as three heavenly kings. Christ sits upon a fourth throne, apart, co-regnant with the Holy Trinity. The Son of God, born of the Virgin, is not hypostatized.

The deacon Theodore accused Avakoum of heresy. Old Onouphry, the disciple of Avakoum, formulated a similar accusation against the deacon Theodore. The followers of Theodore, “Con-substantialists,” called the followers of Onouphry “Tri-substantialists,” and they called each other liars. A schism rose; ardent love gave way to hatred; the monastery was invaded by lying and evil thoughts.

To end these discussions a meeting had been called at “the Banks of Mosses.” Old Onouphry being dead, his disciple Father Hierotheus, now the head and teacher of his school, was summoned to defend himself.

They met at the house of Mother Golendoukha. Her abode was outside the enclosure of the monastery, in a clearing in the midst of the forest. The Onouphrians

refused to enter into discussion within the monastery, fearing a quarrel which might end badly for them, their enemies being superior to them in numbers.

Tichon was present at the meeting. Old Cornelius had stayed away.

"What is the use of talking," he said. "We must burn. In the fire, the truth will be revealed."

The abode of the Golendoukha, a spacious hut, was divided into two parts; a smaller one to live in and a larger one for prayer. All round on the log-built walls were shelves on which were placed holy icons, sacred lamps, and candles glimmering before them. Woodcock tail-feathers were hung on the candlesticks to be used as extinguishers. Benches ran along the walls. Massive books, bound in wood or leather, with brass clasps, and manuscripts, the oldest treatises of the great masters of the desert, written on papyrus, lay upon the benches.

Though it was noon the room was dark and oppressive. The window shutters with leaded panes of dull fish-bladder were closed. Only through the chinks here and there entered shafts of light, which made the flames of lamps and tapers appear red and dim. The air was saturated with a smell of wax, leather, sweat, and incense. Through the open door the gloomy woods and the glade flooded with sunshine were visible.

Monks in black cassocks and hoods thronged round Father Hierotheus, who stood before the pulpit in the centre of the chapel. He looked sedate and well fed, with a pasty face, white as the holy loaves; his blue eyes, slightly squinting, had different expressions; one showed Christian humility, the other philosophic presumption. He had a persuasive voice, "like a sweet-singing ousel," folk said. He was dressed with care; his cassock was of the finest cloth, he wore a velvet kaftan, and the cross on his breast was set with rubies. His sandy and slightly grey hair exhaled attar of roses. Among the shabby monks and moujiks from the forest, he appeared as a real boyar or a Niconian bishop.

Father Hierotheus was a learned man; he had absorbed knowledge from books as a sponge absorbs water. But his enemies affirmed that his wisdom was not from God;

they said he had two doctrines : the one orthodox, which he proclaimed for all ; the other heretical and secret, which he revealed only to the elect—for the most part to the rich and noble. Simple and poor folk he attracted by munificent alms.

From dawn till noon the dispute ran high, but with no results. Father Hierotheus always managed to avoid committing himself. Much as the monks tried they could not convict him.

At last, in the heat of the controversy, a disciple of Father Hierotheus, Brother Spiridon, a quick-eyed, dark little man with temples in curls, like Jewish ringlets, suddenly sprang forward and shouted at the top of his voice :—

“ The Trinity sit together, the Son on the right, the Holy Spirit on the left of the Father. On separate thrones without confounding themselves, sit the three Heavenly Kings, while Christ sits on a fourth apart from them ! ”

“ You split the Trinity into four,” cried the terrified monks.

“ And you make one lump of it, one single Person ! The Trinity is not one, but three ! three ! three ! ” roared Father Spiridon, thrusting up his hands as though he were felling with an axe. “ Believe in the three-fold Trinity ! Without fear divide the Indivisible, the one into three ; Christ makes a fourth.”

And he went on explaining the difference between essence and substance. The substance of the Son is within, the essence sits at the Father’s feet.

“ God became Man not by His substance, but alone by His essence. Had he come down in His substance He would have scorched the universe, and the womb of the Pure Mother could not have borne the wholeness of God ; it would have been consumed.”

“ Oh, erring, worldly brother ! ” supplicated the fathers, “ listen to your conscience, apprehend God. Cast out from yourself the root of heresy, go no further. Repent, beloved brother ! ” the monks implored him, “ Who told you this thing, and where did you see whether the three Heavenly Kings sit separate and not confounding themselves ? Neither the angels nor the archangels can

see Him, yet you say, 'They sit not confounding the persons.' Why was your tongue not burnt for saying this ? "

But Spiridon continued to shout :

" Three, three, three ! I will die for my belief ; even fire could not burn it from my soul."

Seeing they could do nothing with him, the monks returned to Father Hierotheus,

" Be straightforward ! tell us plainly what do you believe in ! The Trinity in Unity or the Trinity in three distinct persons ? "

Father Hierotheus remained silent and smiled disdainfully. It was evident that from the height of his learning he looked down upon these simple-minded men, these beggars, with utter contempt.

But the monks—like gnats—assailed him and more insistently.

" Why don't you reply ? are you deaf ? Like the slate-coloured dragon, you have stopped up your ears to the counsels of the ancient Church ! "

" He has hardened his heart like a Pharaoh ! "

" You do not seek to live peaceably with us monks, you think yourself too far above us. You have broken the law of love."

" Rebel ! Tempter of Christians ! "

" Back ! What do you want of me ! " Father Hierotheus at last burst out, his patience exhausted, receding imperceptibly towards the door. " Don't press me ! You will not be called to account for my opinions. Whether I shall be saved or no, what matter is it to you ? You live by your lights, we live by ours ; we have nothing in common. I pray you let me alone."

Father Provost, an old man, hoary, thick-built and muscular, brandished his knotty staff in the face of Father Hierotheus :

" Mad heretic ! when the judge pummels you with a stick like this, you will soon decide which is your faith ; the Trinity in Unity or the Trinity in three distinct persons."

" Peace be with you, my brethren in Christ ! " said a gentle voice, so unlike the others that every one heard it. It was Father Missail, a hermit, who had come from a

distant desert, a great saint, "young in years but old in wisdom."

"What are you about, beloved fathers? Is it not the devil who rouses and fills us with hatred against our brethren? And nobody seeks the waters of life to quell Satan's fire, only pitch and dry sticks to feed it. Verily, brethren, I have never seen such hate, even among the Niconians! If they get to know about this and begin to persecute us again, they will no longer sin before God, and the tortures they will inflict upon us will be but the beginning of the eternal torments."

All suddenly were hushed as if awakening to reality.

Father Missail knelt and bowed first to the whole assembly, then to Father Hierotheus.

"Forgive me, brethren! Forgive me, beloved brother! Great is your learning; you have a fiery spirit, have mercy upon us simple-minded folk, and put aside these literary controversies, for the sake of charity!"

He rose and was going to embrace Hierotheus. But the latter forestalled him, and fell down on his knees before Father Missail.

"Pardon me, father! Who am I? A dead dog. How can I know more than your Holy Assembly? You say I have a fiery spirit. You make my soul vain. I, a man, am like the frogs which dwell in the marshes. I fill my belly like a pig. But for the Lord's help my soul would go to hell. I can hardly breathe under the passions which oppress me. Oh! sinner that I am! And you, Missail! may God bless you for your words!"

Father Missail with a gentle smile again stretched out his arms to embrace Father Hierotheus. But the latter rose and repulsed him, with an expression of such anger and pride on his face that all were alarmed.

"God reward you for your admonition of me," he continued in a voice suddenly changed and vibrating with fury: "for instructing and exhorting us poor ignorant folk! But it were as well, friend, to know the measure of your strength. You soar high; may you never come toppling to the ground! Who made *you* a teacher? Who made *you* a master? Nowadays every one teaches, and there is no one left willing to be taught. Woe unto us who live

in this evil time ! You are but a child, and yet you presume much. Really, we have no desire to listen to you. Teach them who are contented with such teaching, but keep off us, if you please. Fine teachers truly ! One threatens us with his stick, the other tries to smooth matters over by 'love' ! What is the good of 'love' if based on the ruins of truth ? Even Satan loves his faithful. As for us, we love Christ, and hate His enemies. Rather death, than union with impious apostates ! I am innocent, and the very dust of this place on my feet I shake off before you, for it is written, 'Better one who doeth the will of the Father than a multitude of sinners.' "

And taking advantage of the general confusion. Father Hierotheus, protected by his acolytes, swiftly passed out.

Father Missail went apart and began to pray in a low voice, repeating again and again : " Calamity threatens ! Calamity threatens ! Shield us, Holy Virgin !——"

But the monks began to shout and quarrel more wildly than before.

" Spiridon, you infidel, listen : the Son sits on a throne at the right hand of the Father ! " " Well, that is right, leave him there ! " " No, he drags the Son off the throne, and puts him down at His Father's feet ! "

" Cursed, cursed, cursed, Anathema ! If an angel reveal what is not in the Scriptures let him be anathema ! "

" You ignoramuses ! You know not how to discuss the Scriptures ! What is the good of wasting time or argument on you, village blockheads ! "

" God has blinded you for standing up against Truth ! Curse you, may you perish ! "

" May we have nothing to do with you, either in this world, or the next ! "

All spoke together, and no one listened. Now not only those who believed in the Unity of the Trinity disputed fiercely with those who believed in the three distinct Persons, but brethren of the same persuasion were ready to shout themselves hoarse over mere nothings : the swinging of the thurifer in the shape of a cross ; the eating of garlic on Annunciation-day, the crossing of the legs during confession. Babel was let loose. Every comma and iota in the old books roused wrathful disputations.

"May not a little fault in copying engender a great heresy?"

"We will die for one letter!"

"Learn what is written in the old books, and repeat the Lord's prayer unceasingly, this is all that is required."

"Theodore, God's enemy, thou dog of Hell! distinguish the Lord's cross from that of Peter."

"Christ's cross hath a foot-stock!" Brother Julian tried to prove with a hoarse voice (he was the Reader at "Bank of Mosses." Usually quiet and meek, he now raged like a madman, with foam in his mouth, swollen veins on his temples, and bloodshot eyes.

Father Trophilius, another Reader, came to his help. He jumped up, like a flying-fish out of the water; his neck was stiff as a rod, he quaked and trembled from excessive zeal, his teeth chattered; his voice was like that of an infuriated camel, terrible, untameable in its passion.

He was no longer trying to prove anything, he only used bad language and got the same in return. They had begun with theology, they ended with mere scurrility.

"Satan has set up his house inside you."

"You black scamp, you have sold your soul for a bottle of brandy!"

"Erring beasts!"

"Listen, hark ye about the Trinity!"

"What is there worth listening to? It is impossible to make out your meaning. It is like mat-weaving when the ends have got lost."

"I proclaim heavenly mysteries, I am inspired!"

"Stop your rubbishy ravings!"

"Cursed, cursed, Anathema!"

This council of peasants in the forest of the Vetlonga resembled in many respects the Council of the Churches held at the Imperial Court of Byzantium in the time of Julian the Apostate, fourteen centuries before.

Tichon watched and listened. It seemed to him that these were not men who were discussing about God, but beasts who sought to devour one another. The peace of his beloved desert had been destroyed for ever.

Voices were heard from outside the windows. Mother Golendoukha, Mothers Merope and Onleya looked out and

saw that a crowd was coming out from the wood beside the monastery. It was then remembered that during a religious dispute at Kerjenetz how some laymen, labourers and boatmen who had been bribed, came to the hut where the meeting was held, and fell upon the monks with pitchforks, clubs and axes.

Fearing lest something similar might happen now, the women rushed into the chapel, and bolted the door with the strong oaken bolts, just as the crowd was already knocking and calling out :—

“ Open ! open ! ”

They shouted something else besides, but Mother Golen-doukha, who had assumed the command, was a little deaf and could not hear ; the rest of the women ran hither and thither, cackling like scared hens. They were also prevented from hearing by the shouts inside the chapel, where the monks, oblivious of what went on around them, continued quarrelling.

Father Spiridon was declaring that Christ had entered the Virgin through her ear, and had come out inexplicably through her ribs.

Father Trifly spat in his face. Then Spiridon caught hold of Father Trifly's beard, pulled off his hood, and was going to strike his bald head with a brass cross, when Father Provost knocked the cross out of his hand with a club.

An Onouphrian Reader, the sturdy young fellow Arhipka, rushed at Father Provost and dealt him such a blow on the temples with his fist that the old man fell down unconscious. A battle royal began. The monks appeared to be possessed by demons. In the suffocating gloom, scarcely lit up by the dim light of the holy lamps and shafts of sunlight, fearful faces rushed to and fro ; the fight was carried on with clenched fists, leather straps, rosaries, torn books, leaden candlesticks and burning candles ; bad language, scoffs, moans, and groans, howls and shrieks resounded in the air.

Meanwhile from without the knocks continued, with shouts :—

“ Open ! open ! ”

The wooden wall trembled under the blows ; one of the shutters was hewn off.

Mother Ouleja, puffy and pale as paste, sank down on the floor, and began to shriek so piercingly that all were frightened.

The other shutter cracked and gave way; through the burst fish-skin pane appeared the head of Father Minos, harness-maker to the monastery; his eyes were protruding as he shouted :—

“The soldiers, the soldiers are coming! You fools, what did you lock yourselves up for! Come out, be quick!”

All grew dumb. The fists raised, or the fingers clutching the hair of an adversary, remained suspended, petrified.

Dead silence ensued. Only Father Missail went on wailing and praying. “Calamity has come upon us! Mother of God, be gracious unto us!”

Coming to their senses they rushed to the door, opened it and ran out.

From the crowd, which had collected in the clearing, they learnt the terrible news: soldiers with priests and clerks, were making their way through the forest. They had already destroyed the neighbouring monastery, and to-day or to-morrow they might appear at “the Bank of Mosses.”

CHAPTER III

TICHON saw Father Cornelius surrounded by a number of hermits, peasants and children from the neighbouring villages. "Lose no time, O faithful ones!" exhorted the monk, "bravely thrust yourselves into the fire. Suffer for the Lord's sake! Leap into the flames. 'Here, devil! take my body, you have nothing to do with my soul!' Now our persecutors bring us fire and wood, earth and axe, knife and gallows; but there in heaven angelic songs and praise and joy are awaiting us. When our bodies shall be brought to life by the Holy Spirit, then shall we come forth from the earth, like children from their mother's womb. Prophets and Patriarchs, none will be freed from trial, all have to pass the river of fire, only we shall be free; we shall have burned here. We shall be purged because we enter the flames of our own free will. We shall burn like candles, a sacrifice to God! We shall bake like sweet bread for the Holy Trinity. We will die for the love of the Son of God. More radiant than the sun is the Red Death——!"

"Rather burn, than fall into the hands of Antichrist!" shouted the frenzied crowd.

The women's and children's cries rose even above the men's.

"Run, run into the flames; let us burn! Flee from the tormentors!"

"Now the monasteries are burning," continued the monk, "but after awhile villages and towns will kindle in their turn. I would have loved to set Nijni on fire myself; I would rejoice to see it burn from end to end. One day the whole of Russia will burn with us!"

His eyes glowed with a strange light. They reflected that last fire which shall destroy the world.

When he had finished the crowd dispersed over the glade and in the outskirts of the wood.

Tichon for some time kept wandering about the groups, listening to what was said. He believed all were going mad.

One peasant said to another :—

“ The kingdom of heaven itself is falling into your lap, and you hesitate. Your children are small, your wife young, you love them, you do not desire to perish, but how do you enjoy life with them ? A sack, a pot, and bast shoes is your little all. Even your wife herself yearns for the martyr’s fire ; and you, a man, are more foolish than a woman ? Suppose you live to marry your children and to console your wife ! What then ? What else but the grave ? Whether you burn or no, die you must one day.”

A monk was persuading another monk : “ Expiation for our sins is slow and wearisome—ten years’ public penance, endless fasts and prayers ! Enter now the flames ; and there is an end to your penance ! neither work, nor fasting one hour will bring you to heaven. The fire will purge away all sins. Once burnt you are free from all ! ”

One old man was calling to another :—

“ Come, friend, you have lived long enough. It is time to go into the other world, even if only as the lowliest of martyrs.”

The lads playfully said to the girls :—

“ Come into the fire ! In the other world we shall have golden dresses and red boots, nuts, honey and apples in plenty.”

“ It will be well for the young children to burn,” said the monks ; “ they will avoid sinning, marrying and having children ; their purity will remain uncorrupted ! ”

Others spoke of the great burnings in ancient days ; of how, in the Paleostrovsky Monastery, where two thousand seven hundred people had burnt themselves together with the old monk Ignatius, a miracle had taken place. When the church took fire, after the thick smoke had gone off, Father Ignatius, cross in hand, rose through the cupola, followed by all the other monks and a multitude of people in shining garments and great glory. They went up the road to heaven, and passing the gates, disappeared.

And another recounted how in the Poodoyhski churchyard, where nineteen hundred and twenty persons were burnt, the soldiers on guard saw a luminous pillar descend from heaven, many-hued like a rainbow ; three men in cassocks, radiant as the sun, came down from it and went round the place three times ; one blessed it with the cross, the other sprinkled it with holy water, the third swung the censer. Then they entered the pillar again and ascended into heaven. After this, on the eves of special festivals, many believers saw at that same place wax candles light themselves and heard ineffable singing.

A peasant of Pomone said he had himself had yet another vision. He had lain unconscious in a fever and suddenly saw a moving wheel of fire, and on that wheel tortured men were wailing : " Here are those who refused to burn themselves, but live after the flesh and served Antichrist. Go thou and preach self-burning to all people." A drop fell upon his lip from the wheel ; he awoke, his lip had inflamed. Then he preached to the people : " It is good to burn alive ; this sign on my lip is the stigma made by the dead who refused to burn."

Then the woman Kilikeja sitting on the grass sang about the wife of Alleluja. When the Jews, sent by Herod, sought to kill the child Jesus, the wife of Alleluja hid him and threw her own child into the furnace instead.

Then spake Christ, the heavenly King :
Glory to thee, merciful wife of Alleluja,
Go, tell My will to all My faithful ones !
Let them throw themselves into the fire for love of Me !
Let them cast in also their innocent children.

Nevertheless here and there voices against self-burning could be heard.

" Dearly beloved brethren," entreated Father Missail, " it is well to be zealous for the Lord, yet there should be a measure in all things ! Self-immolation is not acceptable before God. Christ's is the only way. Let those who can, flee ; those who are taken must suffer. But do not seek out death intentionally. Calm down your terrors, my poor children ! "

The frantic Father Triphilius agreed with the meek Father Missail.

"We are *not* mere brands for burning, to no purpose. Are you going to troop together, like pigs in a sty; and then set yourselves on fire?"

"What ignorance!" Father Hieropheus shrugged his shoulders, in sheer disdain for the doctrine and martyrization.

Moreover, Mother Golendoukha, who had already sought death once in the flames, but had been pulled out in time, purposely terrified everybody with her description: how the bodies are contorted in the flames, head and legs shrink together and the blood boils and foams like food in a pot; and how after the fire the bodies lay about, bloated and baked, smelling like roast meat. Some had remained whole, yet at a touch fell to pieces; dogs roamed about, with muzzles grimed with smoke, eating the corpses. A horrid stench spread around; none could pass by without holding his nose. At the time of the burning two black devils with bats' wings appeared above the flames, rejoicing, clapping their hands and crying, "These are ours!" And for many years on that spot voices were heard at night lamenting, "We are lost, lost!"

Finally the opponents of self-burning approached Cornelius triumphantly: "Why did you not burn yourself? If it is as righteous as you say, you teachers ought to set the example. But no! You persuade poor novices into the fire. You are all alike, you teachers of self-burning. You praise it for others, not for yourselves. Are you not afraid of God's wrath? You have burnt enough human beings, spare the remainder."

Then, stung by the taunt, and at a sign from the old monk, Kirukha, a frantic adherent came forward. He brandished his axe, and called out in a loud voice:—

"He who is against self-burning let him come out with his axe, we two will fight it out! A trial by combat! If I am killed, the burning is not acceptable before God; should I kill, then—all we—on to the flames!"

Nobody accepted the challenge.

Then old Cornelius, coming forward, said, "All those for burning stand forth to the right; against, to the left!"

The crowd divided. One part surrounded the old monk, the other stood aside. Those who desired to be burnt

numbered about eighty ; those who refused about a hundred.

The old man lifted his pectoral cross and blessed those who had chosen the burning with the sign of it, and lifting his eyes to heaven prayed in a solemn voice : " For Thy sake, O Lord, and Thy faith, for the Love of God's only begotten Son, we die. We do not spare ourselves. We return our souls to Thee. Joyfully we accept this second baptism by fire that we may not lose our faith ; we seek the flames for the hate of Antichrist, dying for the love of Thee."

" Burn, burn, begin," the frenzied crowd again shouted. Tichon felt that he also would lose his senses if he stayed any longer among this maddened crowd.

He fled into the forest. He ran till he could no longer hear the shouting. A narrow path brought him to the glade grown with high grass and surrounded with impenetrable pines, where he had once prayed to the " Fertile Mother Earth."

The evening glow was dying away on the tree tops. Golden cloudlets floated over the sky. The thicket exhaled a fresh resinous perfume. The stillness was intense.

He threw himself on the ground, buried his head in the grass, and again, as on that day near the Round Lake, he kissed the earth and prayed to her as if he knew that she alone could save him from this fiery delirium of the Red Death :—

Wondrous Queen, Mother of God,
Earth, thou fertile Mother of all ! . . .

Suddenly he felt a hand laid on his shoulder ; he turned round and saw it was Sophia.

She was bending over him and regarding him silently, intently. He too remained silent, and looked up at her. The young girl's face under the black shawl stood out against the gold and azure sky like the icon of a saint upon the golden background. Pale, with lips red and fresh, like a newly opened flower, with innocent eyes, deep as the lake, her face was so beautiful that his heart stopped beating as in sudden fright.

" So you are here, brother !" she said at last. " And Cornelius searching for you everywhere cannot think

whither you have disappeared. Come up ! Let us go. Be quick ! ”

She was excited, joyous, as if great happiness had befallen her.

“ No, Sophia,” he said in a calm firm voice, “ I will not return there again. Really, I have had enough of it ; I have seen and heard sufficient. I shall leave the monastery for good.”

“ And you will not endure martyrdom ? ”

“ No.”

“ You will go without me ? ”

He looked at her entreatingly.

“ Sophia, dearest, do not listen to those madmen. There is no need to burn. God never willed it. It is a sin, a temptation of the devil. Let us go away together, loved one.”

She bent lower still over him with a subtle, tender smile, her face almost touched his ; he felt her burning breath.

“ You shall not go,” she murmured in a passionate whisper. “ I won’t let you go.”

She suddenly took his head between her hands and kissed him on the lips.

“ Sister, sister, what are you doing ? This is not allowed. We might be seen.”

“ Let them see us ! Everything is permitted now ! the fire will purge it all ! Only say you will burn. Do you will it ? ” she asked in a faint whisper, clinging closer and closer to him.

Denuded of thinking-power, strength or will, he whispered :

“ I will.”

The last glow was dying away on the tree tops ; the golden clouds had become grey as ashes. A balmy freshness breathed in the air. The forest sheltered them with the dense shade, earth covered them with her tall grass.

And it seemed to Tichon as though the forest, grass, earth, air and sky were all burning with the last fire which should destroy the world. But he no longer feared. He believed that the Red Death was fairer than the brightness of the sun.

CHAPTER IV

THE monastery was abandoned. The monks had fled like ants from their ruined hillock.

In the chapel, which stood on a mound apart, the Self-burners had assembled. Thence they could observe the approach of the soldiers.

It was an ancient building made of dry logs, so constructed as to give no opportunity for escape from the flames. Instead of windows there were narrow slits ; while the doors were so narrow that it was difficult for a man to pass through them. The porch and staircase had been demolished. Strong bolts had been fastened to the doors and thick planks nailed over the windows.

The preparation for the burning began ; hemp, flax, straw, pitch and bark were piled up, the walls smeared with tar, and in the wooden troughs which surrounded the building gunpowder was placed, a few pounds of it being reserved for strewing on the floor at the last moment. Two sentinels watched on the roof by day and night.

All worked cheerfully as though preparing for a feast. The children helped their elders, the elders became children ; every one was intoxicated with joy. Petka Jisla was the merriest of all. He worked with the energy of five. His withered hand with the "mark of the Beast " gradually got cured ; he was able to move it. Old Father Cornelius ran about like a spider in his web. His eyes, as luminous in the darkness as those of a cat, had a heavy, kindly look in them, a strange charm which compelled obedience.

"Work away, friends !" he cheerily said to those who were going to die with him. "I, the old horse, you, the young colts, together we will gallop towards heaven, like Elias in his chariot of fire."

When all was ready, the door and windows, except one—

the narrowest—were nailed up. The strokes of the hammer were listened to in silence ; they felt as though their coffin lid was nailed over them while they were alive.

Only John the Simpleton went on singing his interminable song ;

A coffin of pine wood tree,
Stands ready, stands ready for me.
Within its narrow wall
I'll wait the judgment call !

To those who wished to confess and be shriven old Cornelius said, " Why trouble, children ! what need have you to confess ? You are now like God's angels, and more than angels ; in the words of David I say : ' Ye are gods.' You have overcome the power of the Evil One. Sin has no longer dominion over you ; you cannot sin. Even though there were one among you who had slain his father or sinned against his mother, even he will be holy and righteous. The flames purge everything."

The monk ordered Tichon to read in a loud voice a passage in the Revelation of St. John, which is always omitted in Russian church services.

" And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write, for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me : It is done."

Tichon, in reading this aloud, experienced his familiar presentiment of the end of all things, more powerfully than ever before. He felt as though those frail wooden walls had already shut them off from the converse of the living, as the sides of a ship keep out water. Outside, time still continued its course ; here it had already stopped, and the end had come ; it was fulfilled.

" I see, I see, I see, beloved ! " cried Kilikeya, interrupting the reading, her face pale and shrivelled, a fixed look in her dilated eyes.

" What do you see ? " asked the old monk.

" I see that great city, the Holy Jerusalem, descending from heaven, like unto a precious stone, a jasper stone, clear as crystal, an emerald, a topaz and a sapphire. The

twelve gates are twelve pearls ; and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass. And the city has no sun, for the glory of God illumines it. I am afraid ! I am afraid ! O my friends ! I see His face more radiant than the sun. Here He is, here He is. He is coming to us ! ”

And they who listened to her believed they saw it also.

When the night came and the candles were lit they all knelt and sang :—

“ Behold, the Bridegroom cometh at midnight and blessed is the servant who is awake. Watch, my soul, be not heavy with sleep, lest the doors of the Kingdom be closed upon thee, and thou be delivered unto death, but awake and cry, ‘ Holy, holy, holy is the Lord. The Holy Virgin have mercy upon us. ’ Remember the terrible day. O my soul, trim thy lamps with oil, for no one knows when the cry will be made : ‘ Behold, the bridegroom cometh. ’ ”

Sophia, standing next to Tichon, held his hand. He felt the trembling pressure of her hand, and saw the smile of shy joy on her face ; so does the bride smile at her bridegroom before the altar. And his soul was filled with responsive joy. Now he believed that the Red Death was God’s will while his previous fear was Satan’s temptation. “ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for My sake and the Gospel’s sake shall find it. ”

They expected the soldiers that night, but they did not come. In the morning they were as heavy as after a severe drinking bout.

The monk’s vigilant eye was everywhere. To those who grew despondent and timid, he gave little balls of dark scented paste (which most likely contained a stupefying poison). Swallowing these caused a sort of mad ecstasy ; the weakest no longer dreaded the fire, but raved about it as heavenly bliss.

To give themselves courage they told each other tales about the voluntary death of starvation, which was supposed to be much more terrible than death by fire.

These martyrs were placed in an empty hut, without doors and windows, furnished only with benches. To prevent their killing themselves all garments were taken

from them, even the belt and cross. They were let into the hut through the roof, and the hole was fastened up so that no one could escape. Guards armed with clubs were posted around the hut. Their torments lasted three to six days; they wept, praying, "Give us to drink," they bit their own bodies and cursed God. Once twenty people were locked up thus in a threshing barn; weary of waiting they succeeded in breaking one of the boards and crept out; but the guards knocked them on the head with their clubs and killed two; then closing the opening up, they reported what had happened to the leading monk, asking what they had better do. He ordered straw to be put round the barn and then kindled.

"The Red Death is infinitely easier," concluded the speakers, "it is so quick that there is no feeling."

But a small girl of seven, who had been sitting quietly on the bench and listening attentively, suddenly began to tremble, and jumping up, rushed to her mother, caught hold of her skirt, and cried in a piercing voice:—

"Mamma, mamma, come, come away! I don't want to be burned!"

The mother tried in vain to quiet her, but she continued crying louder still:—

"I don't want to burn, I don't!"

And such animal terror was in that scream that all shuddered, realizing the horror of what was about to happen.

The child was petted, threatened, punished, yet she continued to scream till at last, almost black in the face and breathless, she fell to the ground in convulsions. Father Cornelius bent over her, blessed her with the sign of the cross, beat her with his rosary and recited an exorcism:—

"Go forth, go forth, thou evil spirit!"

Nothing did any good: he then lifted her in his arms, opened her mouth and forced her to swallow one of the balls of dark paste. He began to stroke her hair gently and whisper into her ear. The little girl grew calmer, she seemed to have dozed off, but her eyes remained open, her pupils dilated with a fixed stare, as in delirium. Tichon listened to the man's whisper. He was telling her about the Heavenly Kingdom, the Garden of Eden.

"Uncle, will there be any raspberries there?" asked Akoulina.

"Yes, dear, there will. Very large berries, the size of an apple, and so sweet, so sweet!"

The little girl smiled, she evidently rejoiced at the idea of these heavenly raspberries. The old man continued to fondle and lull her with almost motherly tenderness. Yet to Tichon there appeared something insane, pathetic, hungry, in the monk's luminous eyes. "Like a spider sucking in a fly," thought he.

The second night came; but there was no sign of the soldiers.

During the night, one of the old nuns made her escape. When all were asleep, even the guards, she crept out on the roof, and tried to let herself down with a rope of neckerchiefs she had tied together, but they gave way and she fell. For a long time her moanings were heard under the windows, but at last they ceased; maybe she had crept away, or passers-by had picked her up.

There was little room in the chapel. The victims slept on the floor close to one another, the men on the right, the women on the left. Yet—were they dreams or demons?—shadows stealthily flitted from the right to the left, from the left to the right.

Tichon woke up and listened. A nightingale was singing in the distance and her song echoed the moonlit night, the freshness of a dewy meadow, the perfume of a pine forest, freedom, voluptuousness, the bliss of life. And as in response to the nightingale's song, strange whispers, rustles, sighs, resembling sighs and kisses of love, rose from the chapel floor. Plainly the fiend was still striving in man. Human passions were not quenched, but fanned, by the imminence of death.

Cornelius did not sleep. He was praying and neither saw nor heard anything, or if he did, he pardoned "his poor children."

"God alone is without sin, man is weak; like dust he falls and rises like an angel. Not he who goes wrong with a maid or a widow is a sinner, but he who errs in his faith. We do not sin when our body takes liberties; but the church sins when it tolerates heresy."

Suddenly Tichon felt that somebody was embracing and clinging to him. It was Sophia. He was frightened, but it flashed upon him, "The flames will purify all," and feeling through the black habit the warmth and freshness of the innocent body, their ardent lips met.

And the caresses of these two children in the dark building, that common coffin, were as innocent as those of Daphnis and Chloe of old on the sunny plain of Lesbos.

Meanwhile, John the Simpleton, squatting on his heels, a candle in his hands waiting for the dawn, swayed gently to and fro and sang endlessly :—

You hollowed oaks will prove,
Fit house for us.

The nightingale sang on of liberty, voluptuousness, and the bliss of life. Her song seemed a delicate mockery of the song of the Simpleton.

Tichon recalled a distant pale, white night, a group of people on a raft upon the glassy surface of the Neva, between two skies, two abysses, and the gentle languid music wafted across from the Summer Garden, kisses and sighs from the kingdom of Venus :

'Tis time to cast thy bow away,
Cupid ! we all are in thy sway.
Thy golden love-awaking dart
Has reached and wounded every heart.

Before dawn, Minei, a man eighty years old, tried to escape. Kirukha caught him, they had a fight. Minei nearly killed Kirukha with his axe. The old man was seized by the throat and locked in a closet, where he went on screaming and reviling Cornelius with all his might.

At daybreak Tichon looked out to see whether the soldiers had arrived ; he saw nothing but the empty glade flooded with sunshine, the dreamy, friendly, but gloomy pines, and dewdrops sparkling in iridescent hues. He felt the fresh perfume of the pinewood, the gentle warmth of the rising sun, the peace of the blue heavens ; and again all that was going on in the chapel seemed a madman's delirium.

Another long summer's day began. The weariness of waiting grew unbearable. Famine threatened. There

was but little water and bread : a bag of rye biscuits, and two baskets of sacramental loaves.

On the other hand there was a quantity of red wine. They drank it eagerly. Some one, being drunk, suddenly started a coarse song. It sounded sadder than the wildest moan.

The people began to murmur, they whispered together in corners and looked angrily at old Cornelius. What if the soldiers do not appear at all. Will they have to die of hunger ? Some demanded that the door should be opened and bread sent for. Yet their eyes expressed but one thought, escape. Others wished to burn at once without waiting for the persecutors. Others prayed, but their face proclaimed they would rather have blasphemed. Others again, having eaten the dark balls, which the monk distributed more and more freely, raved, laughing and weeping. One lad in a fit of madness seized a candle burning before an icon and began to set the straw on fire. It was quenched with difficulty. Some sat for hours without a word in a kind of waking trance, not daring to look into one another's eyes.

Sophia, sitting near Tichon, who lay on the ground, exhausted by sleeplessness and famine, sang a melancholy song which the Chlisti sang at their meeting, a song about the loneliness of a human soul, forsaken in life as in a dark wood. The song ended in a sob :—

Thrice holy mother of God,
Implore thy Son for us !
On earth are many sinners ;
On the moist earth, our mother,
Our nurse supreme.

Nobody saw them. Sophia rested her head on Tichon's shoulder, and cheek to cheek with him she wept.

"I am grieved for you, Tichon, my darling," she whispered in his ear, "I have led you into perdition, wretch that I am ! Will you escape ? I will get you a rope. Or stay, I will beg Cornelius ; there is a subterranean path leading into the wood, he will let you go out."

Tichon, exhausted, remained silent, smiling at her like a child half awake. His senses wavered. Through his

mind floated idly distant memories, as in some delirium ; abstract mathematical definitions, to the graceful and severe beauty of which—their icy transparency and regularity—he was now specially sensitive. Well had old Pastor Glück compared mathematics to music, to the crystal music of the spheres ! He remembered also the discussion between Glück and James Bruce over Newton's *Commentaries on the Apocalypse*, he could hear the dry, short, wooden laughter of Bruce, and his words, which had at the time echoed in Tichon's soul with such alarming presentiment. Bruce had said, "At the very time that Newton was writing his *Commentaries*, here at the other extreme of the world, here in Muscovy, wild fanatics, named Raskolniks, were also commenting in their rude, uninstructed way upon the Apocalypse, and drawing conclusions almost identical with those of Newton. The Raskolniks daily expect the end of the world ; some of them sleep in coffins, and sing funeral hymns ; others burn themselves alive. How extraordinary this coincidence of imaginations ! That the extreme West and the extreme East, the greatest enlightenment and the greatest ignorance, should meet in a single Apocalyptic conception ! A fact which in itself is enough to make one believe that the end of the world *is* drawing nigh ; that we *shall* all go to the devil very soon !" Newton's prophecy as repeated by Glück assumed a new and vivid significance, "*Hypotheses non fingo* ! I don't make hypotheses ! Like a moth to the fire, a comet rushes to the sun. From the fusion of these the heat of the sun will so increase, that the earth will be consumed. It is written in the scriptures: 'The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be consumed.' Then will be fulfilled the two prophecies ; that of the man of science who knew, and that of the ignorant who had faith." Tichon also recalled the old octavo, No. 461, of Bruce's library ; gnawed by the mice, bearing the illiterate Russian inscription, "Lionardo D'Avinci's 'Treatise on Painting,' in German." A portrait of Leonardo, which had an odd look, also, of Prometheus or Simon Magus, had been slipped into the book. And beside Leonardo, Tichon thought

he saw another face, likewise terrible, the face of a giant clad in a Dutch skipper's leather jacket, whom he had once met in Petersburg in the Troitsa square, near the "Four Frigates" coffee house. It was the face of Peter, once, he thought, so hateful to him, now suddenly admired, beloved. The two faces had something in common, something similar and yet opposed: Da Vinci stood for thoughtful Contemplation; Peter for reason in Action. And both these faces seemed to exhale on Tichon a delicious cool air, such as snow-clad mountains waft to a wanderer exhausted by the heat of the dales.

"O Physics! save me from Metaphysics!" He remembered Newton's words, so often repeated by the drunken Glück. In these two faces lay the sole salvation from the fiery heaven of the Red Death—in both homage to Earth, the "fertile mother of all."

Then all grew confused and Tichon fell asleep. He dreamt he was flying over some visionary city: either the old legendary town Kitish, or the New Jerusalem, or perhaps Stockholm, or else the Glass City, "like unto clear glass and a jasper stone, clear as crystal." A music which was at the same time mathematics filled the luminous city.

He suddenly awoke. All around him were bustling about with joyous faces.

"The soldiers, the soldiers have come!"

Tichon looked out and saw afar off, on the borders of the wood, in the evening twilight, men around a fire wearing three-cornered hats, green coats with red lapels, and brass buttons. These were the soldiers. "The soldiers have come. Kindle! friends! God is with us!"

CHAPTER V

CAPTAIN PIRSKY had received the following instructions from the Bishop of Nijni-Novgorod.

"The haunt of the Raskolniks is to be approached secretly, lest the people set themselves on fire. Should they shut themselves up in their monastery or chapel the soldiers must surround them in close order, and watch their shelter carefully night and day. At all costs prevent a fire. Try and persuade them to surrender, and give them hope that they will all be freely pardoned. And when they surrender make a list of their names, put them into footstocks or chains to make flight impossible, and send them with all their goods under guard to Nijni. But if, unmoved by your persuasions, they refuse to surrender, stubbornly remaining shut in, you must get them out as best you can by siege and famine; catching the ringleaders that their heresy may not spread. Take them prisoners by force or starvation, but *avoid bloodshed*. Should they set their robbers' den or chapel on fire, you must flood it with water, and hacking away windows and doors, drag them out alive."

Captain Pirsky, a brave old retired soldier, who had been wounded at Poltava, considered the destruction of monasteries, a "cunning invention of the army of long-haired popes," and would have preferred to have encountered the severest fire of the Swedes or Turks, than to meddle with the Raskolniks. They chose to burn themselves and he always received the blame! "The captain and other lay officers should exercise more caution and skill, for it is obvious that the Raskolniks seek death in the flames for fear of the Captain." Pirsky explained that the Raskolniks were driven to death, not by fear but by their stubborn hate of the world. "They are filled with anger against us,

whom they consider apostates, and would rather suffer death than accept the new faith, so inflated and stubborn are they over minutest trifles." But these explanations were not listened to at the bishop's palace and the remonstrances continued.

With regard to the "Bank of Mosses," he made up his mind to act with great caution and prudence. In the evening, ordering his troops to retire into the wood and not to stir, he approached the chapel alone, unarmed, carefully inspected the place and knocked at the window, repeating a prayer after the manner of the Raskolniks.

"Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon us!"

No one replied. All was quite as the grave in the chapel, nobody could be seen. The tree tops gently rustled. The fresh night breeze was rising. "If they set themselves on fire we are done for," thought the captain; he knocked again and repeated:—

"Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon us."

Again silence, troubled only by the marsh crickets and a dog howling in the distance. A falling star flashed across the dark sky in a fiery curve and dispersed in sparks. He felt terrified as though he really were knocking at a grave.

"Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon us," he uttered for a third time.

The shutter at the window moved. A light fell through the chink. At last the window slowly opened and Cornelius' head peered through it.

"What do you want? Who are you, and why have you come?"

"By his Majesty Tsar Peter's decree we have come to exhort you to tell us who you are, of what rank, what name, how long you have lived in these woods, what permission you had to leave your houses and by what decree you live here? If you have any doubts as to Holy Church and her sacraments, you should describe them in writing and send your teachers to deliberate with the chiefs of the clergy, without fear or mistrust."

"We peasants and commoners have assembled here in the name of Jesus Christ, and we will do what is right by our wives and children," replied the old man in a slow,

measured, solemn tone. "We desire to die in the flames for our ancient Faith and we will not give ourselves into your hands; you are persecutors, and your Faith is new. Should any of you desire to be saved let him join us in the flames. We shall be with Christ to-day."

"Enough, friend," replied the captain in a kindly voice, "the Lord be with you. Put away this seditious project, disperse to your houses and no one will hurt you. You may return to live happily in your villages. You will pay a double tax; and that's all."

"Ah captain, tell that to children in arms; we folks know what we have to expect. Fine talk, and there it ends."

"I swear, upon my honour, to let every one of you go free without hurt," exclaimed Pirsky. He spoke the truth; he really had decided to let them off, contrary to the decree, on his own responsibility, if they would only surrender.

"But why should we waste our strength in shouting, our voices might give way." I am getting hoarse," he added with a smile. "The window is so high I can scarcely hear. Look here! Drop a leather line and I will fasten myself to it and you can pull me up through the window, but a wider one than this. I could not get through this one. I am alone, you are many; there is nothing for you to fear. We will talk, and with God's help we may come to an understanding."

"To what purpose should we talk? How can we, destitute beggars, vie with such as you," answered Cornelius, sarcastically revelling in his power and superiority, "between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; none of our people, if he wished, could go to you, none of yours could join us. I would advise you, Captain, to go back. We shall light up directly."

The window was flung to. Again silence ensued, only the wind rustled in the tree tops, and the crickets chirped from the swamps.

The captain returned to his soldiers and treated each man to a glass of vodka." "We will not fight with them," he said, "there are but few men among them, mostly women and children. We will break open the door and catch them without any weapons."

The soldiers prepared ropes, hatchets, ladders, pails and barrels full of water, and long poles each ending with an iron hook, to haul the human beings out of the flames. At last when it was quite dark the men approached the chapel along the border of the wood, then across the glade on all-fours, hiding in the tall grass and behind bushes like sportsmen beating their game.

Arrived at the chapel, which was still as the grave, they began to put up their ladders.

Suddenly, the window opened and Cornelius cried :—

“Back! When the powder and saltpetre take fire the falling beams will kill you!”

“Surrender,” cried the captain; “we will take you somehow, see we have muskets and pistols—”

“You have pistols, we have the club of Christ,” replied a voice from within.

Behind the soldiers a priest appeared with a cross and began to read the bishop’s missive.

“He who kills himself unlawfully is a lost man, he loses his temporal life, and draws upon himself everlasting torment.”

The muzzle of an old cannon appeared in the window, a blank cartridge was fired, not to kill but to intimidate the persecutors.

The priest hid himself behind the soldiers, while old Cornelius brandishing his fist yelled :—

“Hell’s torches! Ashes of Sodom! Sands of the ruined tower of Babylon! give me only time, dogs, you won’t escape me. I will treat you better yet. The Lord Jesus Christ will soon come and fight you, all will be fulfilled, thrones will crumble, and your bones will be thrown to the dogs like Jezebel’s! We shall burn in earthly fire, you will burn in the flames everlasting! Forge then innumerable blades, prepare then the most cruel torments, invent terrible deaths, our joy will only be the keener! Kindle, friends! the Lord is with us!”

Women’s sarafans and garments, coats, skirts, shirts, men’s tunics were thrown out of the window :—

“Here, persecutors, take them, cast lots, we need nothing. Naked we came into the world; naked we will return to the Lord!”

"Spare at least your children, you damnable crew!" cried the captain in despair.

A funeral chant, soft and low, arose within the chapel.

"Force the door!" ordered the captain.

All was ready within. The firing was prepared. The hemp, flax, pitch, straw and bark were piled in large heaps. The wax candles before the icons were so slightly fixed that the least vibration would cause them to drop into the troughs of gunpowder. This was purposely arranged to make self-burning look less like suicide. The children were seated on benches, to which their garments had been nailed so that they could not run away, their hands and feet were bound to prevent their struggling, their mouths were tied round with handkerchiefs to stifle their cries. On the floor a quantity of frankincense in clay vessels had been lit, so that the children should be suffocated before their elders and not see the real terror of the conflagration.

A woman had just been delivered of a baby girl. She was laid on the bench to be baptized with fire.

Then having taken off their clothes they all put on new white shrouds, and on their heads crowns adorned with eight-branched crosses in red ink, they knelt in rows, tapers in hand, to meet the Bridegroom.

Old Cornelius lifting up his hands prayed in a loud voice :—

"Lord God accept us, Thy unworthy servants! We are weak and powerless, and dare not fall into the hands of our enemies. Protect this chosen flock, which follows Thee, the good Shepherd, fleeing the cruel wolf—Antichrist. Save and be gracious unto us. Thou knowest the destinies of all, make us firm and steadfast to bear the suffering. Have mercy upon us O Lord, have mercy upon us. Holy Virgin, we implore thee, have pity upon us; we die for Thy pure love's sake!"

All repeated after him.

"We die for Thy pure love's sake!"

Most pathetic was this human cry to God!

At this moment the soldiers, having surrounded the church, and climbed the ladders, began to demolish with their axes the thick log walls, the windows frames and doors.

The walls shook. The tapers fell, but every time chanced

to miss the gunpowder troughs. Then at a sign from the old monk, Kirucha seized a bundle of tapers, burning before the icon of the Virgin, threw them into the gunpowder and jumped aside. The powder exploded, the fuel blazed up, streams of fire spread along the floor and walls. Thick smoke, first white, then black, filled the chapel, it choked the flames. Then fiery tongues alone pierced the smoke and hissing, like darts of serpents, approached the people, licked them and retreated as in play.

Terrible screams burst out. And through the groans of the sufferers, through the noise of the flame, continued the song of triumphant joy:—

“The Bridegroom cometh at midnight.”

Only two or three minutes passed between the kindling of the fire and Tichon losing his consciousness, yet what he saw, nothing could erase from his memory.

The old monk seized the newly-born infant, blessed it in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and threw her into the flames—the first victim.

John the Simpleton stretched his hands out towards the fire, as if to meet the coming Lord, whom he had been expecting all his life long.

Kilikeya's shroud had caught fire, her hair was ablaze, surrounding her head like a crown of flames, she felt no pain and remained immovable; her eyes wide open; in the fire no doubt she saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, descending from the heavens.

Petka Jisla stooped and running forward threw himself into the fire head foremost, like a gay swimmer diving.

Tichon also beheld something joyous and intoxicating in the terrible glare and noise. He remembered the song.

Green grass is growing at her feet,
Starred with florets blue and sweet.

He seemed to recognize these flowers in the transparent blue heart of the flames. Their celestial colour promised ineffable bliss, but the way to it lay through the Red Death.

The besiegers succeeded in removing several logs. The smoke escaped through the opening. Soldiers with the help of poles were hauling the victims out and pouring

water over them. Mother Theodulia, a centenarian, was dragged out by her legs; Vitalia caught hold of her and was also rescued, but she died the next moment, her body was one wound. Father Spiridon, when pulled out, cut his throat. He lived four hours longer, crossed himself continually after the manner of the Raskolniks, reviled the Nikonians and rejoiced, as the captain stated in his report, at having mortally wounded himself.

Others, after the first contact with the flames, of their own accord rushed to the opening, trampling upon one another, and climbing over the pile of bodies, cried to the soldiers :

“ Help ! help ! we burn ! ”

Animal fear took the place of angelic ecstasy. Those who remained endeavoured to hold back the fleeing. An old man had clutched with both hands the edge of the opening, ready to jump out, but his grandson, a boy of seventeen, knocked a stick across his hands, so hard that he let go and the grandfather fell back into the flames. A woman was escaping with her little boy, but the father caught hold of the child's legs, swung him in the air and dashed out his brains against a beam. The porter of the monastery, a stout man, who had fallen into a pool of burning pitch, writhed and leapt as in a dance. “ Like a fish in a frying pan,” thought Tichon with sinister irony, and closed his eyes so as not to see.

The heat and smoke were stifling him. Purple harebells on a blood-red field were beckoning to him and ringing plaintively. He felt that Sophia was nestling up and embracing him. And under her shroud, her young, innocent body was fresh as some flower, blossoming in the furnace. And still living voices continued to chant amid the groans of the dying.

“ Lo, the Bridegroom cometh ! ”

“ My Bridegroom, my beloved Christ ! ” whispered Sophia into Tichon's ear. He felt that the fire which consumed him inwardly was more intense than the flames of the Red Death. They dropped together, as in one embrace the bride and bridegroom lie down upon the nuptial couch.

The burning woman, arrayed with the sun and winged with fire, carried him away into the flaming abyss.

The heat was so intense that the soldiers had to stand back ; two were scorched, one had fallen in the chapel and perished.

The captain was angry.

“Fools, accursed fools ! I'd rather fight the Swede or the Turk than have to do with these beggars !”

The old man's face was paler than when he lay wounded on the battlefield of Poltava.

Fanned by the wind the flame rose higher and higher with a noise like thunder. Burning brands flew about like fiery birds. The whole chapel was a furnace, and in this furnace as in the fiery pit of hell, writhed a pile of contorted human bodies. Skins were bursting, the blood bubbled, the fat boiled, an atrocious odour filled the air. Suddenly the logs of the roof fell. A column of fire shot into the sky like a gigantic torch.

Earth and sky were lit up by the red glow, as though the last fire which was to consume the world were already blazing.

Tichon recovered consciousness in the wood, on the fresh dewy grass.

He learnt afterwards that at the last moment, when he had swooned, Cornelius and Kirucha had taken him up in their arms and rushed into the sanctuary. Under the altar was a trap-door, which led into a secret chamber and thence, following a subterranean passage, they reached the wood, a thicket where the persecutors could not find them.

Almost all the preachers of “Self-burning” acted in this way : they let the others perish, but they and their closest disciples ran away in order to continue their teaching.

Tichon had taken a long time to recover. The monk and Kirucha sprinkled him repeatedly with water ; they thought he would die, though his burns were not severe.

At last he opened his eyes and asked :—

“Where is Sophia ?”

The monk looked at him with his lucid, kindly eyes.

“Do not fret, my child, do not sorrow for your bride. Her soul is in heaven, together with the holy martyrs.”

And lifting his eyes to heaven he crossed himself and said with joyful accents :—

"Eternal remembrance be to God's servants, who of their own accord sought death by flames. Rest, beloved, until the day of Resurrection, and pray for us; we too will drink the cup when our time comes. It has not come yet, we must go on labouring for Christ. You too, my son, have passed through the test of fire," he continued, turning to Tichon, "you are dead to the world, and have risen in Christ. Endeavour then to live this second life not for yourself, but for God. Put on the armour of light, rise and walk, be a soldier of Christ, a preacher of the Red Death."

And he added with cheerfulness:—

"We will go to the Ocean, to the border land: there also we will kindle fires, but we will be bold, we will burn innumerable brethren. God will bless our zeal and the whole of Russia will blaze up, and after Russia the whole world."

Tichon said nothing, he had closed his eyes. The monk thinking he had again fallen asleep, went to the hut to prepare herbs for curing burns. Then Tichon, left to himself, turned away from the still bloody sky, and pressed his face against the ground.

The moist earth eased his pain, and he felt that the Earth had heard his prayer, that she had saved him from the Red Death, and that he was coming forth from her womb anew, like babe, like a dead man resuscitated. And he flung his arms over her, kissed her as though she were alive, praying:—

Wonderful Queen, Mother of God!
Earth, thou fertile Mother of all.

A few days later, when the monk was preparing to leave, Tichon escaped from him. He now understood that the church of the "Old Believers" was no better than the church of the Orthodox. He had decided to return into the world, there to seek the true faith until he found it.

Book X

FATHER AND SON

CHAPTER I

TO Alexis the Church was no longer the true church after he became acquainted with the Tsar's ukase, whereby the seal of the confessional was no longer inviolate. It seemed to him that the Lord had, without doubt, abandoned His Church since He allowed its humiliation.

When the Moscow trial was ended, Peter returned to Petersburg on March 24, the eve of Lady Day. He applied himself with so much zeal in his "Paradise" to the building of ships, the establishing of Government offices and the transaction of general business, that many in his official circle thought that the inquiry had really ended, and that the whole affair was to be consigned to oblivion. The Tsarevitch, had, however, been brought from Moscow under guard, together with the other convicts, and lodged in a separate house next to the Winter Palace.

Here he was kept a close prisoner, being allowed neither to go out, nor to see any one. It was rumoured that he had gone out of his mind through excessive drinking.

The Easter holy week came. For the first time in his life Alexis refused to prepare himself for Communion. Priests were sent to try and persuade him, but he declined to have anything whatever to do with them; he took them all as spies.

Easter fell on April 13. The Easter midnight service was celebrated in the Cathedral of the Troitsa, one of the oldest buildings in Petersburg, and as small, low and dark as a simple village church. The Tsar, the Tsaritsa and

the Ministers and senators were present. Alexis at first refused to attend, but he was brought thither by the Tsar's orders.

In the semi-dark church the tomb of Christ with a picture of the dead was installed according to custom, and the Psalm of the great Saturday, chanted over the representation, sounded like a funeral dirge.

The officiating priests came out of the sanctuary still robed in their black lenten vestments; they raised the tomb with the representation of our Lord, bore it into the sanctuary and closed the doors: they had laid the Lord in the grave.

The singers intoned the last verse of the Canticle:—

“When thou didst descend unto death, Eternal——”

Silence ensued.

Then suddenly the crowd began to sway and move as though hurriedly preparing for some event. The wax taper which each one bore was lighted from that of his neighbour. The Church was filled with a soft light, and in this luminous hush there was the expectation of great joy.

Alexis lighted his candle at that of his neighbour, Count Peter Andreitch Tolstoi—his Judas Iscariot. The delicate light brought back to him all that he used to feel at the early Easter Mass; but he thrust these feelings aside, he no longer cared to recall them, he even dreaded them. Gazing absently at Prince Menshikoff's back as he stood in front of him, he tried to fix his attention on how to avoid dropping some of the melted wax upon the gold-embroideries of the Prince's dress.

From behind the closed altar gates came the voice of the deacon:—

“Thy Resurrection, O Christ, our Saviour! is chanted by angels in heaven.”

The gates opened and two choirs sang in response:—

“Grant unto us, who are on earth, to glorify thee with a pure heart.”

The priests, now arrayed in light paschal vestments, issued from the sanctuary and the procession was formed.

The great bell of the Cathedral began to peal; it was

answered by the bells of the other churches. Rejoicing peals then burst forth from all sides, accompanied by the thunder of cannon in salute from the Peter and Paul fortress.

The procession left the Cathedral and the outer doors were closed. The sanctuary had become empty and again every sound was hushed.

The Tsarevitch remained standing motionless with drooped head, gazing always in the same absent way : he forced himself to hear nothing, to see nothing.

From without came the voice, broken and feeble, of the Metropolitan, Stephen :—

“Glory be to the Holy Trinity which maketh alive, one and indivisible, now and for ever, throughout all ages.”

Then came other voices, low and subdued as though from a distance :—

“Christ hath risen from the dead !”

Then louder and louder, nearer and more joyous they sounded.

At last the doors of the Cathedral opened wide, and together with the noise of the returning multitude rang forth the triumphant song, which shook the very earth and the heavens :—

“Christ hath risen : by His death He hath overcome death, and hath given life to those who were in the darkness of the grave.”

And such fulness of joy was in this hymn that nothing could resist it : it was as though all those things were about to be accomplished, which creation had been awaiting from the beginning of time ; as if a miracle were about to take place.

The Tsarevitch grew pale, his hands trembled, he very nearly let his candle fall. In spite of himself his whole being was pervaded by an all-pervading sense of joy. Life, suffering, death itself seemed to him to fade and become of no account before it.

He burst into tears, and, in order to conceal his emotion, he went out upon the flight of steps in front of the Cathedral.

The April night was mild and serene. A smell of thawing snow, of moist bark and of unopened buds filled the air.

The church was surrounded by people ; below, in the dark square, the wax tapers shone like stars, while above, in the dark heavens, the stars gleamed like tapers. Clouds, light as angels' wings, floated past. The ice was thawing on the Neva. The joyous sound of the rumbling of breaking ice floes mingled with the peal of church bells. It seemed as though both earth and sky were chanting : " Christ is risen ! "

After Mass, the Tsar, coming out upon the Cathedral steps, exchanged the Easter Greeting not only with the Ministers and senators but also with all his servants, down to the meanest kitchen boy.

The Tsarevitch looked at his father from a distance, not daring to draw near. Peter, however, saw his son and himself came up to him :—

" Christ is risen, Aliosha," he said, with the old kindly smile.

" Truly He is risen, father ! "

And they exchanged three kisses.

Alexis felt the familiar touch of the plump, clean shaven cheek, of the soft lips ; he recognized also the familiar odour. And again, just as in the days of his childhood, his heart began to throb furiously, and the wild hope : " What if he should really forgive and spare me ! " almost took away his breath.

Peter was so tall that he had to stoop nearly every time that he gave the kiss, and so, as his neck and back began to ache, he withdrew to the sanctuary from the besieging crowd.

At six o'clock, when daylight had just broken, they went from the Cathedral into the Senate House, a low, long, white-washed building, like barracks, which adjoined the church. In the narrow audience halls tables had been spread with Kulitchi and Paschi ; eggs, wine and vodka to break the fast.

At the entrance to the Senate House, James Dolgorouki overtook the Tsarevitch and whispered to him that Afrosinia would shortly arrive in Petersburg, that she was well, but that her delivery was daily expected.

In the vestibule the Tsarevitch met Catherine the Empress ; she looked young and pretty in her gorgeous robe made of

white brocade, which had the double eagle worked in pearls and diamonds on the front ; she wore the pale blue St. Andrew's ribbon across her shoulder and a diamond star. Her face, slightly touched up by rouge and powder, looked young and attractive. Receiving her guests, she, like a good hostess, greeted them all with her uniform, affected smile. She had a smile for the Tsarevitch also, and he kissed her hand. She embraced him three times, and they exchanged the Easter greeting, the red eggs. Just as she was about to leave him, suddenly he fell at her feet, and cast upon her a glance so distraught that she retreated slightly from him.

"Sovereign Lady ! Have pity upon me ! intercede with my father on my behalf, so that he may allow me to marry Afrossinia. I ask nothing else. God is my witness ! My life will not be for long. I should wish to withdraw myself far from you, and to die in peace. Have compassion, Mother ! for this joyous holy day's sake !——"

And again he looked at her in such a fashion that she grew afraid. Suddenly her face trembled and she began to cry. Catherine was not averse to shedding tears, and was in fact a mistress in the art. Russians were in the habit of saying that she had the gift of tears ; and foreigners, who were not deceived, declared that she could melt the heart as surely as any Andromache on the stage. Yet now her tears were not feigned ; her pity was really stirred for the Tsarevitch.

She bent down to him and kissed his forehead. Under the low dress he perceived the ample white bosom with two charming little dark moles—beauty spots perhaps.

"Poor, poor boy ! would I not do it for you ? But what is the use ? Would *he* allow himself to be influenced in the least degree ? I should only injure your cause the more."

And casting a furtive glance around to make sure that no one was listening, she brought her lips close to his ear and hurriedly whispered :—

"Your case is desperate ; my poor boy ; so bad that you ought to fly at once ; leave everything and fly !"

In came Tolstoi. Catherine, leaving the Tsarevitch, quickly dried her tears with a lace handkerchief and turned to Tolstoi with her usual cheerful face, and asked him

whether he had seen the Tsar, and why he delayed his coming.

On the threshold of the door leading from the adjacent hall appeared the tall, angular figure of a German lady, dressed with no pretention to taste ; she had a long, narrow, old-maidish face, shaped somewhat like a horse's head. She was a princess of East Friesland, ex-maid of honour to the late Crown Princess Charlotte, and was now acting as governess of her two orphan children. She had such a decided, commanding air that all involuntarily made way before her. She carried the little boy Peter in her arms and led Natasha, now four years old, by the hand.

The Tsarevitch scarcely recognized his children ; it was so long since he had seen them.

" Mais, saluez donc monsieur votre père, mademoiselle ! " whispered the old lady to Natasha, who had stopped evidently unable to recognize her father. The little boy first stared at Alexis in curiosity, then turned away, waved his little arms and started to cry aloud.

" Natasha, Natasha, darling ! " said the Tsarevitch stretching out his arms to her.

She raised to him her large sad eyes, pale blue, like her mother's, smiled, ran up to him and threw her arms round his neck.

In came Peter : he glanced at the children and said in an angry voice to the Princess, in German :

" Why have you brought them here ? This is no place for children. Go away ! "

The governess looked at the Tsar and indignation gleamed in her kind eyes ; she was about to reply, but seeing that the Tsarevitch had submissively let Natasha go, she shrugged her shoulders, shook the little boy, who had not yet ceased his cries, angrily caught the little girl's hand, and silently went out, with the same commanding air which she had borne on entering the hall.

As she was passing out, Natasha turned round and looked at her father with a glance which reminded him of Charlotte. The child's look expressed, like her mother's, resigned despair. Alexis' heart contracted. He felt that he would never see his children again.

They sat down to table. The Tsar between Feofan

Prokopovitch and Stephen Yavorski. Opposite to them the Kniaz or mock-pope with the entire "Most Drunken Conclave." They had found time to break the fast, and were already beginning to squabble.

For the Tsar this was a double festival : Easter and the breaking up of the ice on the Neva. Dreaming about the launching of new ships, he cheerfully looked through the window upon the white ice blocks, which, bathed by the morning sun, floated like swans on the blue surface.

The talk centred round ecclesiastical affairs.

"Father," asked Peter, addressing Feofan, "will our Patriarch soon be ready?"

"Soon, your Majesty! I have almost completed his cassock," answered the prelate.

"And I have already finished his hat," laughed the Tsar.

The "Patriarch" was none other than the Holy Synod, the "Cassock" signified the ecclesiastical regulations which Feofan was drawing up; the "Hat" the ukase which instituted the Holy Synod.

When Feofan began to speak of the utility of this new college every feature of his face lighted up and began to twinkle with almost exaggerated merriment : it sometimes seemed as if he himself were laughing at his own words.

"A College will exercise a more liberal spirit than is possible to any single director. The fact also should not be overlooked, that a College presents no spirit of antagonism to the government. For the people do not recognize the difference which exists between the Spiritual and the Temporal powers, and when they behold the glory and honour which surrounds a pontiff, they think that he is a second Tsar, co-equal, or even greater than he. And when a dispute arises between the two, all will range themselves on the side of the Spiritual, rather than worldly lord, flattering themselves that by so doing they are serving God's cause, and that far from defiling, they are even sanctifying themselves by the shedding of blood. The evils which this error calls forth are indescribable. A survey of the history of Constantinople, prior to the time of Justinian, proves this. The Papacy gained ascendancy by no other means ; it divided the Roman Empire, arro-

gated to itself immense power, and brought about the ruin of several kingdoms. There is no need to recall similar facts in our own history ! Such evils are impossible in an ecclesiastical college. The people will become peaceable and will abandon all hope of winning the support of the clergy in their rebellions. Lastly, a spiritual college will be to a certain extent a school of clerical administration, where the members can learn with ease the science of politics. Let us hope that in Russia, with the help of God, the time will soon come when the clergy will lose their uncouthness, and that the future will bring us great goodness as the result of our labour."

The bishop looking straight at the Tsar with an obsequious smile, in which cunning curiously bordered on impertinence, and concluded with the solemn words :—

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build My Church !"

Silence followed. Only the fraternity of the "Most Drunken Conclave" continued their uproar ; the honest Prince James Dolgorouki murmured, so that no one could hear him :—

"Render to God the things that are God's, and unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's."

"And you, Father, what think you of this business ?" said the Tsar to Stephen.

While Prokopovitch was speaking, Stephen had kept his head lowered, his eyes closed, as though asleep ; and his old bloodless face seemed dead. Yet Peter thought that he discerned in this face what he most feared and hated : the quiet spirit of the rebel. Hearing the Tsar's voice the old man started up, as though awaking from a doze, and gently said :—

"How can I, your Majesty, speak on such a subject as this ! I am old and foolish. Let the young talk, we old ones will listen."

He inclined his head lower still and added in a murmur :—

"It is impossible to sail against the wind."

"Old man ! You are always whining," retorted the Tsar, shrugging his shoulders in vexation ; "what do you want ? Out with it !"

Stephen looked at the Tsar and seemed to shrink within

himself. His whole bearing expressed humility, without a shade of the rebellious spirit. He began to speak in a hurried eager voice, as though afraid the Tsar would not hear all he had to say :—

“Most gracious Sovereign ! Give me leave to retire in peace and quietness ! My services are known to God, partly also to your Majesty, and I have spent on them my strength, my health, and I might say my life. My eyesight is growing dim, my limbs weak ; gout has wrung my fingers, and I suffer from other maladies. Your Majesty’s favour and fatherly protection have hitherto sustained me in the hours of trial, and thereby all sorrow seemed to lose its bitterness. Yet now I see your face turned away from me, and your graciousness is withdrawn. Sire, whence comes this change ?”

Peter had long before this ceased to listen to him. He was absorbed in the performance of the princess-abbess Rjevsky, who kept bending almost to her knees and then darting forward one foot after the other to the accompaniment of many drunken voices :—

Come beat a livelier strain !
Blow loudly now my pipe !

“Give me leave to retire to the Donskoi monastery or wherever your Majesty chooses to permit,” continued Stephen in a plaintive tone, “and should you have doubts as to my motives, I pray that God’s means of grace may serve only for my undoing, if I harbour any evil designs. Whether it be at Pertersburg, at Moscow, or at Riazan, I shall still remain in your sovereign power, from which I should neither be able to escape, nor have cause for desiring to do so.”

Meanwhile the singing continued in full swing :—

Come beat a livelier strain !
Blow loudly now, my pipe !
For my father-in-law has tumbled asleep,
From the stove to the log-heap, O !
Oh, if I had only known,
Or had this chance foreseen ;
He’d have got a longer drop,
And cracked his skull I ween !
O, my luck, O !

The Tsar stamped his feet and thumped his knee, whistling the air :

Ah, burn, burn——

The Tsarevitch glanced at Stephen ; their eyes met. The old man stopped short as though coming to himself. With a shamefaced expression he cast down his eyes, and lowered his face, while two tears rolled along his wrinkles. His face again wore the lifeless expression. Feofan, the new red-faced Silenus archbishop, was scornfully smiling.

The Tsarevitch involuntarily compared the two faces. The one reflected the Church's Past ; the other bore the promise of its Future.

The air was becoming close in the small, low halls, and Peter ordered the windows to be opened. A cold wind coming from Lake Ladoga blew across the Neva, a common occurrence at the time of the breaking up of the ice. Spring had all at once changed to Autumn. The clouds, which in the night had seemed light as the wings of angels, had become lowering, dark and heavy like great boulders ; the sun grew weak and its rays wore a sickly aspect.

From the taverns, which were very numerous in the neighbourhood of the Gostinny Dvor, and on the further side of the Royal works in the Food and Tolkoolchi markets, rose a sound of voices like the roaring of wild beasts. Somewhere near a fight was in progress and a voice cried :—

" Hit him again ! He is too well-fed and sleek, that fellow ! "

And the deafening sound of the church bells, which entered through the open window together with this drunken uproar, seemed also drunk, coarse and insolent.

In front of the Senate House, in the middle of the square, a moujik was standing over a dirty pool on which floated the red shells of Easter eggs. He had nothing on except his shirt, the rest of his clothing had probably been pawned at the wine shop. As he staggered along he appeared to be trying to make up his mind whether or no he should tumble into the pool : his speech was freely interlarded with oaths, and broken by hiccoughs. Another poor wretch had fallen into a ditch, and his bare legs sticking out waved helplessly in the air. The rigorous authority of the police was, on

this day, quite powerless to cope with the drunkards, whose prostrate bodies lay about in the streets as thickly as the slain on a battlefield. The whole town was nothing but an immense tavern.

The Senate House where the Tsar sat feasting with his Ministers was part of this tavern. Here also the guests were shouting, reviling and fighting one another.

The Kniaz-Pope's burlesque choir, was attempting to rival the cathedral choir. The one sang :—

Christ hath risen !

The other replied with :—

Come beat a livelier strain !
Blow loudly now, my pipe !

The Tsarevitch recalled the holy night, the holy joy, the depth of past emotion, the expectation of a miracle, and he felt as if he had fallen from heaven itself into the mire ; like the sot who was lying in the gutter without. Bitter feelings took possession of him. What was the good of beginning Easter as they had done, if this was to be the close ? There is not, neither will there be, any miracle, but only the “ abomination of desolation ” in the Holy Place, to the very end !

CHAPTER II

PETER was no less fond of Peterhof than he was of his "Paradise." He went there each summer, and personally supervised the laying out of pleasure gardens, vegetable beds, ornamental cascades of fountains. He ordered that one cascade was to be broken and rough with foam, another, on the contrary, was to fall with a surface smooth as glass; a pyramid of water was to be designed by means of a series of small cascades. In front of the one which formed the apex the legend of Hercules contending with the seven-headed Hydra was to be represented; from the seven heads jets of water were to shoot; while further down the car of Neptune was to appear, drawn by four sea-horses which also gave forth sprays of water. Forming the border of this central group were Tritons blowing their conchs from which jets played in different directions. Designs were to be prepared for the arrangement of each fountain and of the landscape which was to surround it; and the latter were to resemble French and Roman gardens.

A pale May night lay over Peterhof. The sea was as calm as a mirror. Against a green sky shot with pink mother-of-pearl hues, were outlined the dark firs and the yellow walls of the palace. The dim windows, like blind eyes, reflected the light of the coming dawn. In this light everything looked pale and faded, the green of the grass and of the trees was ashen grey, the flowers were as things dead, and all was still in the empty gardens. The fountains slept. Only from the mossy banks of the casades, and from the porous stones, which formed the walls of grottos, drops fell from time to time like tears.

A mist was rising, and in it gleamed like phantoms countless marble gods, a complete Olympus of risen deities.

Here on the very verge of the world, near to the Hyperborean sea, in this pale night, which resembled the twilight of Hades, the dim shadows of dead Hellas wore an aspect of infinite sadness ; as though, having risen they were dying a second death from which there should be no awakening.

Overlooking the close-clipt garden close to the sea, stood a small Dutch house, roofed with tiles, the Tsar's palace Monplaisir. Here too all was quiet and empty. One window only was lighted, and that by a single candle, which was burning in the Tsar's office.

At the writing table sat Peter and Alexis facing one another in the double light of candle and dawn. Their faces, in harmony with all their surroundings, were pale and spectre-like.

For the first time since his return to Petersburg the Tsar was questioning his son. The Tsarevitch answered in a calm voice ; he no longer dreaded his father, but only felt weary and dejected.

" Who among the clergy or laity knew anything of your revolutionary designs, and what words passed between you on this subject ? "

" I know nothing beyond what I have already admitted," replied Alexis, for the hundredth time.

" Have you never said, ' I spit upon them all, provided the mob are staunch to me.' "

" Perhaps I did say that. I was drunk. I cannot remember everything. When drunk I always speak without thought and with an absolutely unbridled tongue ; therefore it is quite possible that I spoke defiantly in company, and gave vent to some such expression. You know yourself, Father, that a drunken man is no longer a human being—— But what does it matter ! "

He looked at his father with so strange a smile that the father felt a shudder pass over him, as though a madman were sitting opposite to him.

Having searched among some papers, Peter pulled one out and showed it to the Tsarevitch.

" Is this your handwriting ? "

" It is."

It was the rough draft of the letter which he had

written in Naples to the Prelates and Senators, beseeching them not to abandon him.

“ Did you write this of your own free will ? ”

“ No, I was forced to write it by Count Schönborn’s secretary, Kühl, ‘ because,’ said he, ‘ it is rumoured that you are dead : if you refuse to write, the Emperor, in his turn, will refuse to keep you ; ’ and he did not leave me until I had written it.”

Peter pointed with his finger to the following passage in the letter :—

“ I beseech you *now* not to abandon me *now*.” The word *now* had been repeated and both times had been crossed out.

“ Why have you written ‘ now ’ and why have you drawn your pen through the word ? ”

“ I can no longer remember,” answered Alexis, growing yet more pale.

He knew that this crossed out *now* was the sole key to his most secret thoughts with regard to the rebellion, his father’s death, and his possible murder.

“ Has this been really written under pressure ? ”

“ Yes, certainly. ”

Peter rose, went into the next room, called an orderly, gave him some order, then returned to his table and began to write down his son’s depositions.

Footsteps were heard outside the door. It opened, and Alexis gave a feeble cry as though he were about to faint : on the threshold stood Afrossinia.

He had not seen her since he left Naples. No longer with child, she had probably been delivered in the fortress where, as James Dolgorouki had told him, she had been incarcerated on her arrival in Petersburg. “ Where is the child ? ” thought the Tsarevitch. He trembled from head to foot. His first impulse was to rush towards her, but his father’s steadfast gaze checked him, and he remained rooted to the spot. Only his eyes sought to meet hers, but she seemed unconscious of his presence.

Peter addressed her in a kind voice :—

“ Is it true, Afrossinia, as the Tsarevitch tells me, that he was compelled by the Emperor to write this letter to the Bishops and Senators ? ”

"It is false," she replied, in a calm voice; "no stranger was present, I alone was in the room with the Tsarevitch at the time. He told me he was writing some letters which were to be distributed secretly in Petersburg, while others were to be sent to the Bishops and Senates."

"Afrossinia! Afrossinia! What are you saying!" stammered Alexis in terror.

"She knows nothing, she has forgotten, or mixed it all up," said he to his father, with that strange sinister smile of his. "I was then sending to the Viceroy's secretary the plan of the Belgorod attack, and not this letter."

"This very same, Tsarevitch; you wrote and sealed it in my presence. Have you forgotten! I saw it," she continued in the same calm tone. Then all at once she darted at him that very glance with which she had confronted him, when, three years ago, in Viasemsky's house with a knife in his hand and drunk, he had threatened her with violence.

This look told him that she had betrayed him.

"My son," said Peter, "you yourself must see that this is a matter of grave importance. If these letters were written of your own free will, it is clear that your projects for revolutionary measures were not vague and undefined, but that you counted on being able to put them into execution. In the avowals which you have made you have passed over this fact not through forgetfulness, but of set purpose, in order that you might continue to work for the realization of your schemes. However, I do not wish to bear an uneasy conscience and to accept accusations without full enquiry. For the last time I ask you, Did you write it of your own free will?"

The Tsarevitch remained silent.

"I regret the necessity, Afrossinia," said Peter, "I cannot help it, but you must be handed over to official interrogation."

Alexis glanced at his father, and then at Afrossinia, and fully realized that if he persisted in maintaining silence she would be delivered up to torture.

"I confess it," he said in a voice scarcely audible, but the next moment all his fear departed and he felt quite indifferent to all things. Peter's eyes flashed with undisguised joy.

"For what purpose did you write the word 'now?'?"

"In order that the people might take my side, in the belief that the reports of military risings in Mecklenburg were true. And then thinking that this was wrong I crossed out the word."

"Which means that you rejoiced to hear of these risings?"

The Tsarevitch did not reply.

"And if you were glad," continued Peter, as though he had heard an answer, "you intended to join the revolutionists?"

"If they had sent for me I would have joined them. I expected a summons after your death, because——"

He stopped, grew yet more pale, and finished with obvious difficulty:—

"Because they wished to assassinate you, but I did not think that there was any design for depriving you of the empire during your lifetime."

"But if there had been such a design?" asked Peter quietly, with a side glance at his son.

"If I had had the people with me in sufficient force, even during your lifetime I should have laid claim to the empire," answered Alexis in the same low tone.

"Declare all you know," ordered Peter, turning to Afrossinia.

"The Tsarevitch has always ardently desired to rule," she began, in a quick decisive tone as though repeating something which she had learnt by heart. "He ran away because your Majesty was supposed to be trying to kill him by some means or other. When he learnt that your youngest son, the Tsarevitch Peter Petrovitch, was ill, he said, to me: 'You see my father takes his own course, while God wills another.' He also counted upon the Senators: 'I will turn out all the old ones and replace them by new ones, of my own choice! And whenever he heard tell of prophetic visions, or read in the journals that all was quiet in Petersburg, he used to say that these visions and this tranquillity were significant: 'Either my father will die, or a rebellion will break out——'." She continued to speak for some length of time; she repeated expressions of his which he no longer remembered to have used, and she laid bare his innermost thoughts, thoughts

which he had not even dared to confess to himself. "When Tolstoi arrived in Naples, the Tsarevitch wished to give up the Emperor and place himself under the protection of the Pope, It was I who kept him back from doing so," concluded Afrossinia.

"Is all this true?" Peter asked his son.

"It is," answered the Tsarevitch.

"You may go now, Afrossinia. Thank you!"

The Tsar gave her his hand: she kissed it, and turned away to leave the room.

"Afrossinia! Afrossinia!" stammered the Tsarevitch, with a convulsive movement of his whole body towards her, and as if unconscious of what he was saying "Farewell, Afrossinia! Perhaps we shall never meet again. The Lord be with you!"

She neither answered nor gave him a look.

"Why do you treat me like this?" he added in a very low tone. There was no reproach in his voice, only infinite astonishment. He buried his face in his hands, and heard the door close behind her.

Peter made a pretence of reading some papers, but he glanced furtively from time to time at his son. He seemed slightly moved and expectant.

It was the calmest hour of the night, and the calm seemed all the more intense, for it was as light as day.

Suddenly the Tsarevitch removed his hands from his face, and the expression upon it was dreadful.

"Where is the child? Where has it been taken to?" he demanded, fixing a feverish gaze upon his father. "What has happened to it?"

"What child?" asked Peter, not understanding him all at once.

The Tsarevitch pointed to the door through which Afrossinia had disappeared.

"It is dead," answered Peter, avoiding his son's glance. "It never lived."

"That is a lie," exclaimed Alexis, raising his fists as though threatening his father. "It has been killed! Strangled, or else drowned like a whelp! Why has this been done to him, innocent babe as he was?—It was a boy?"

" Yes."

" If God had granted to me to rule over this country," continued Alexis thoughtfully, as though speaking to himself, " I would have made him my heir—— I meant to call him Ivan—Tsar Ivan Alexejevitch. The body—where is it ? What has been done with it—— Speak !"

Peter remained silent.

Alexis clutched his head with his hands ; his face became convulsed and purple. He remembered the Tsar's custom of laying stillborn children in spirits of wine, and preserving them along with other curiosities in his museum.

" You have sealed him up in a glass jar, a glass jar with spirits of wine !—— The heir of the Tsars of Russia swimming in spirits of wine, like a frog !" He burst out into such wild laughter that Peter shuddered all over. " A madman," he again thought, and he felt that intense loathing for his son which the sight of spiders, cockroaches and reptiles always roused in him.

But this feeling soon gave place to the blindest rage. His son was holding him in derision, and was purposely playing the madman so as to escape any further inquiry into his past deeds.

" What else have you to confess ?" he asked ; thus renewing the interrogation without deigning to notice the condition of Alexis.

The laughter of the latter ceased as suddenly as it had burst forth. He threw back his head until it rested on the back of the arm-chair, and turned pale as death. He remained silent, but his blank gaze was fastened upon his father.

" If you were reckoning upon the support of the people," continued Peter, raising his voice and forcing himself to appear calm, " did you not send envoys to prepare them for the rising ? or perhaps you had learnt that they were already prepared ?"

Alexis remained silent.

" Speak !" cried Peter, and his face became convulsed with rage.

The face of Alexis quivered. He opened his lips with difficulty, and said :—

" I have told you everything. I shall say no more."

Peter struck the table with his fist and bounded to his feet :—

“How dare you ?”

The Tsarevitch too had risen and was looking steadfastly at his father. There was a strange and momentary resemblance between these two faces.

“Why use threats, Father ?” said Alexis in a low voice. “I am not afraid of you. I fear nothing, You have taken everything from me ; you have destroyed everything in me, body and soul. Nothing else remains. You can kill me. Do so. I am quite indifferent.”

His lips moved with a slight smile, in which Peter read only supreme contempt. His fury burst all bounds, and roaring like a wounded beast, he threw himself upon his son, seized him by the throat, and, hurling him to the ground, began to kick him and to beat him with his stick, giving vent the while to the same inhuman roar.

In the palace, people woke in terror from their sleep, and hurried to the quarter whence these sounds came. But no one dared to enter the room of the Tsar. With blanched face, each one crossed himself as he approached the door and heard that sinister sound : there behind the closed door a wild beast might be tearing in pieces a human being.

The Tsaritsa was sleeping on an upper story of the palace ; she was hastily roused by attendants and came down half dressed : but she no more than the rest could summon sufficient courage to enter. Only when silence at length reigned in the room did she half open the door, look within, and glide on tip-toe behind her husband.

The Tsarevitch lay on the floor in a dead faint. The Tsar had sunk back into a chair, almost in a state of unconsciousness himself.

The Court physician, Blumentrost, was sent for. He reassured Catherine, who feared that the Tsar had killed his son. The Tsarevitch had been sorely beaten, but no serious wounds nor fractures were discovered. He soon regained consciousness and seemed calm.

The Tsar was in a worse condition than his son. When he had been brought, almost carried, into his bedchamber, he was seized with such violent convulsions that Blumentrost feared paralysis.

In the morning he felt better. Towards evening he got up, and notwithstanding Catherine's entreaties and the physician's advice he ordered a boat and went to Petersburg. The Tsarevitch followed in a closed boat at the same time.

The next day, on May 14, a second manifesto concerning the Tsarevitch was published, in which it was declared that the Tsar had promised to grant his son a pardon on the understanding that he sincerely repented and made a full confession of his misdeeds ; but since Alexis, in contempt of this proffered favour, had concealed his plot for making himself master of the empire with the aid of foreigners or Russian revolutionists, the pardon thus offered was hereby annulled and cancelled."

On the same day it was decided that the Tsarevitch should be tried in the High Court as a traitor to the state.

A month later, on June 14, he was conducted to the fortress of Peter and Paul, and lodged as a prisoner in the Troubejkoi wing of it.

CHAPTER III

“**T**O the Most Reverend Metropolitans, Archbishop, Bishops and other members of the Clergy.

“You are sufficiently acquainted with the fact of the unprecedented transgression of my son against me, his father and sovereign. I possess full power, moral and judicial, and especially according to Russian law, by which parents even in their private homes exercise many rights over their children, to deal with him for this his transgression according to the dictates of my own will, without consulting the opinion of others. Notwithstanding this, I fear to sin before God. It is evident that each one is less competent to judge clearly his own affairs than those of other people ; a doctor, even the most skilful, does not prescribe for his own ailment, but has recourse to other members of his profession. In like manner do I now confide to your care this malady of mine, and I ask you to heal it, because I fear eternal death. If I had taken in hand my own cure I should never have realized the serious nature of that malady and the grave importance which attaches to the fact that I swore before God to my son, both by letter and word of mouth, to pardon him if he made full confession of his guilt. And though he broke the agreement by concealing the most important point, namely, his projected rebellion against us, his Father and his Tsar, yet we remembering the word of God which, in the 17th Chapter of Deuteronomy, enjoins that appeal be made in such a case to the clergy, our will is but that you Archbishops and Priests who set forth the word of God, do search in the Scriptures for some indication of the punishment which befits our son for his ungodly and Absalom-like conduct towards us. You will seek in all setting forth of the divine laws, and in the Holy Scriptures, and you will report unto

us your finding in writing, signed by your own hand. We shall then be able without adding to the weight of our conscience to come to a clear decision in this matter. We confide ourselves to you—the revered guardians of God's laws, the faithful shepherds of Christ's flock and the zealous protectors of the Fatherland, and we conjure you by virtue of your holy office to act in this matter with integrity and impartiality.

“PETER.”

The prelates replied :—

“This is a case in which arbitrament belongs to the civil rather than to the spiritual tribunal. He in whom sovereign power resides cannot be judged by his subjects, but he ought to act in accordance with his own wishes and private judgment, without taking counsel of those whose position is that of obedient submission to his will. However, since we have been commanded to do so, we herewith lay before you those passages in the Holy Scriptures which may be cited as bearing upon this terrible and unprecedented crime.”

Then followed quotations from the Old and New Testaments, and in conclusion :—

“This matter does not come within our province ; for who has raised us to the position of judges of him whom we recognize as Lord and Master ? How can the members afford counsel to the head when they themselves depend upon its guidance and are swayed by it ? Besides, our judgment can only be a spiritual one. The power of the sword of steel is not vested in the Church, but the power of the sword of the spirit only. All this we submit to the monarch's consideration with profound humility, and we propose to him that he act in this matter as may seem best in his own eyes. Should he desire to chastise the guilty according to the measure of his guilt, he has the example of the Old Testament ; whereas if he desire to show grace, he has the example of Christ Himself, who pardoned the prodigal son, and preferred mercy to sacrifice.

“In short, the monarch's heart is in the hand of God. May he choose that part to which God inclines him !”

It was signed :

“The humble Stephen, Metropolitan of Riazan ;

“The humble Feofan, Bishop of Pskoff.”

Also by four bishops, two Greek Metropolitans, those of Stavropol and Thyphaid, four archimandrites, including Theodosius, and two head-monks—all future members of the Holy Synod.

To the Tsar's main question, concerning the oath which he had passed to his son to forgive him at all costs, the Fathers had made no response at all.

Peter read this epistle with a feeling bordering upon consternation. The prop upon which he relied for support had given way beneath him like rotten timber. He had obtained what he himself had wished for ; he had been only too successful. The Church had accepted the Tsar's supremacy to such an extent that she had well-nigh ceased to exist : he himself embodied the Church. The Tsarevitch said with a bitter smile, when he heard this clerical pronouncement :—

“These humble monks are wilier than the devil himself. They have got as yet no ecclesiastical college, but they have already learnt spiritual diplomacy.”

Once more he felt that the Church was dead, and he recalled the words of the Lord to him of whom it was said : “Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build My church.”

“When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest ; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.”

CHAPTER IV

THE first Session of the High Court was opened on June 17, in the Audience Hall of the Senate House. The judges consisted of ministers, senators, generals, governors, captains of the army and navy, majors, lieutenants, sub-lieutenants, ensigns, war-commissioners, officials of the new government departments, and old Boyars, numbering in all, civilian and military, 127 men. Truly a very mixed assemblage ! as those of the nobility who were present commented among themselves, Some could not even write, and thus were unable to sign the sentence.

After hearing Mass, which was solemnized in the Church of the Holy Trinity, to invoke Divine aid in their difficult undertaking, the judges assembled in the Senate House. The doors and windows of the hall were open, not only to allow the entrance of fresh air, for it was a hot and heavy day, but also to give to the trial some semblance of publicity. The neighbouring streets had, however, been closed by chevaux-de-frise and barricades ; while a whole battalion of the guards, with guns shouldered, was drawn up on the Square to keep the "rabble " at a distance. The Tsarevitch was brought from the fortress under the custody of four officers with drawn swords.

There was a throne in the Audience Hall, the Tsar, however, did not mount it, but seated himself in an arm-chair at the end of the hall. Behind two rows of tables covered with red cloth were seated the judges. The Tsarevitch took up a position in front of his father, like a defendant facing the plaintiff.

When the Court was declared open Peter rose and said :—
" Gentlemen of the Senate and Judges, I pray you to judge this case in the fullest spirit of equity, as its nature

demands, yielding no place to flattery or sordid motives. If you decide that a light punishment will suffice, but hesitate through fear of my displeasure from passing such a sentence, I give you my word that this will not be incurred. I pray you also not to give any weight to the consideration that it is the son of your Tsar whom you are called upon to judge. Misled by no mere appearance, be strictly impartial ; let the rights of man and man prevail, and imperil in no wise your own souls and mine, for our consciences ought to be clear on the day of the last Judgment, and our country secure."

The Vice-Chancellor Shafiroff read aloud a long list of the crimes charged against the Tsarevitch, some of which he had already publicly admitted, others being new, which it was alleged he had concealed at the first Inquiry.

"Do you plead 'guilty'?" asked Prince Menshikoff, who had been elected president of the Court.

All expected that the Tsarevitch would fall on his knees before his father, and with tears would pray that mercy might be shown him, as he had done at Moscow ; but when they saw him rise and look round the assembly with a calm gaze they knew that events would take a different course.

"Whether I be guilty or no is not for you, but for God alone to judge," he began, amid silence sudden and profound, and the breathless expectation of all. "How is it possible for you to pass righteous judgment without freedom of speech? Where is your freedom? You are the slaves of the Tsar ; whatever he bids you say, you do say. This is called a trial, but it is only an exhibition of injustice and tyranny. You know the fable of the wolf who went to law with the lamb. Your tribunal is a tribunal of wolves. Were I innocent a hundred times over, you would condemn me all the same. If instead of you it was the whole Russian people who were proceeding to judge between me and my father—that would be a very different matter. I love the people. Peter is great, very great ; but at the same time his rule is stern and heavy and it is hard to breathe under it. What lives have been lost, how much blood has been shed ! The earth herself is groaning beneath it. Do you hear nothing, do you see nothing? But what is the use of speaking? You are not a Senate at all, you

are lackeys of the Tsar, his lackeys all of you, from the highest to the lowest!"

A murmur of disapproval drowned the last words, yet nobody dared stop him. All looked towards the Tsar, waiting for him to speak. But the Tsar remained silent, not a muscle of the stony, rigid face quivered; only the large flashing eyes encountered the fixed gaze of his son.

"Why are you silent, Father?" said the Tsarevitch suddenly with a mocking smile to the Tsar. "Has it startled you to hear the truth? Had you merely ordered my head to be cut off, I would not have said a word; but since you have instituted this mock tribunal, whether it be agreeable to you or not you will have to hear me. When you lured me back to Petersburg from under the Emperor's protection did you not swear by God and His judgment to pardon me everything? What account do you give of that promise? You are dishonoured in the sight of all Europe! The Autocrat of Russia, a perjurer and a liar——"

"Such language cannot be tolerated— It is *lèse-Majesté*. He has gone out of his mind— Away, away with him!" rose from a number of voices.

Prince Menshikoff came to the Tsar and whispered something to him. But the Tsar continued silent, as though unable to see or hear anything; his face was as expressionless as that of one dead.

"You shall be the first to stain the block with the blood of a son, the blood of Russia's Tsars," Alexis rejoined, and his words rang with a prophetic accent. "This blood shall descend upon successive generations of our lineage unto the last Tsar of our race—all shall perish in blood. God will visit your sin upon Russia!"

Peter stirred heavily, with indescribable effort, as if he were striving to rise from under some terrible burden. At last he stood up; his face became convulsed and distorted, the stone mask seemed to become reanimated, his lips parted and a hoarse sound escaped from his throat.

"Silence! silence! I will curse you!"

"You will curse me?" exclaimed the Tsarevitch beside himself. He rushed upon the Tsar and raised his fists.

All were terror stricken: it seemed as though the next moment he would strike his father or spit in his face.

"You will curse me! I myself will curse you—Villain—Murderer, Beast—Antichrist!—Be accursed, accursed, accursed!"

Peter fell back into his chair and held his hands out as in self defence.

All started up. A pause ensued, as at a cry of fire or murder. Some closed the window and doors, while others sought safety in flight; some again surrounded Alexis and tried to drag him away from his father, and others rushed to succour the Tsar. He had fainted, he had had another fit like that of a month ago at Peterhof. The session was closed.

That same night the High Court assembled once more and sentenced the Tsarevitch to be examined under torture.

CHAPTER V

THE ORDER OF PROCEDURE AT THE TORTURE OF THOSE UNDER ACCUSATION

“THE examination under torture of those accused of crime shall take place in a specially reserved spot termed Sasténok, surrounded by fences and covered with a roof. The judges shall be present at the proceedings with a secretary, and a clerk shall register the words of him undergoing torture.

“In this place a strappado shall be erected; which shall consist of three beams, two driven into the ground the third connecting them transversely at the top. At the appointed hour the administrator of the torture is to come in with his instruments—a wooden collar to which is attached a rope, a knout, and some strips of leather.

“On the arrival of the judges the torturer shall throw one end of the long rope across the transverse bar, and taking the accused shall draw his arms behind him and confine them in the collar; he and his assistants appointed for the task shall then throw their weight upon the rope in such a fashion that the victim cannot touch the ground, but shall remain suspended by his arms which are twisted behind him. Then his feet shall be strapped together, and fastened to a beam erected for the purpose in front of the strappado. The prisoner being thus pinioned and fully outstretched, the flogging shall commence and at the same time the interrogation of the accused, and the official registration of every word extracted shall take place.”

When on the morning of June 19 the Tsarevitch was brought into the torture chamber he was still ignorant of the sentence of the court.

The headsman Kondrashka Tioutioune came up to him and said :

“ Undress.”

The Tsarevitch still did not understand.

Kondrashka laid his hand on his shoulder. Alexis looked at him and understood, but no fear took possession of him. His soul was devoid of all feeling. He felt as if he were asleep and in his ears rang the song of an old foreboding dream :—

Fierce fires are burning,
Cauldrons are steaming,
Blades of knives sharpened
All to butcher thee !

“ Raise him ! ” said Peter to the headsman.

The Tsarevitch was suspended on the strappado. He received twenty-five blows with the knout.

Three days later Peter sent Tolstoi to his son.

“ Go to-day after mass to the lodging of the Tsarevitch, question him on the following points and note down his replies :—

“ (1) For what reason has he refused to act according to the least of my wishes ? He knew such conduct was wholly indefensible ; why then has he felt neither shame nor remorse ?

“ (2) Why was he then so boldly defiant of all the punishment which he knew would ensue ?

“ (3) Why has he sought to win his paternal inheritance by other means than obedience ? ”

When Tolstoi entered the dungeon of the Trubetzkoi bastion where the Tsarevitch was incarcerated, the latter was lying on his couch. Blumentrost was preparing a medical dressing ; he was examining the scars on the back, exchanging old bandages for new ones soaked with some cooling fomentation. The court physician had been ordered to cure the Tsarevitch as quickly as possible so as to fit him for the next torture.

Alexis lay in a fever and was delirious :—

“ Fedor Franzovitch ! send her away for God's sake, send her away. Dont you see her there, mewing like a cat ? the cursed thing, who caresses ! Suddenly she will

fly at my throat and tear my heart out with her claws——”

All at once he recovered consciousness and recognised Tolstoi.

“What do you want of me?”

“Your father sent me——”

“Again to torture me?”

“No, no, Tsarevitch! Fear nothing! It’s not for examination, only for information. . . .”

“I know nothing more, nothing more,” groaned the Tsarevitch tossing on his couch. “Leave me alone! Kill me, only don’t torture me again! If you are afraid to kill me, give me poison or a razor, I will do it myself.—— Only be quick, be quick!”

“What are you talking about, Tsarevitch? Come, come, be quiet!” began Tolstoi in his gentle mellow voice, looking kindly at him, “If God be willing, all will come right. This world is full of strange events. Slow and sure. God Himself has suffered and we too must bear our share of suffering. Do you think I do not pity you, my poor fellow?”

He took out the inevitable snuffbox with the Arcadian shepherd and shepherdess, took a pinch and wiped a tear from his eye.

“Ah, I am sorry for you. I pity you with all my heart. I would give my life for you!——”

And leaning over him he added in a hurried whisper:—

“Whether you believe me or no, I have always wished you well, and to-day still——”

He stopped short, alarmed by the fixed gaze of the eyes of the Tsarevitch who was slowly endeavouring to rise:—

“Judas the Traitor! This for your good wishes!” He spat in his face, and then with a dull moan fell back upon the bed.

Blumentrost rushed up to him, crying to Tolstoi:—

“Go away at once; if not, I cannot be responsible for anything.”

The Tsarevitch had again fallen into delirium.

“There see how she lies in wait for me—— Her eyes are just like two blazing coals, her whiskers bristle like those of my father! Get away!—— Fedor Franzovitch, for heaven’s sake drive her away I implore you!”

Blumentrost gave him some spirit to smell and laid some ice on his head.

At last he recovered consciousness and glanced at Tolstoi without the least anger, evidently oblivious of what had just happened.

"Peter Andreitch, I know you have a kind heart. Oblige me by an act of friendship. Heaven will recompense you. Beg my father to grant me permission to see Afrossinia——"

Tolstoi gently kissed the bandaged hand and said in a voice tremulous with sincere tears.:

"I will obtain this permission! I will do all that is possible for you. Only we must first answer some little questions. There are but three."

He read aloud the list of questions which the Tsar had drawn up.

The Tsarevitch closed his eyes in exhaustion.

"What further answer can I make? God is my witness I have already said all I had to say! I have neither words nor thoughts left. I have become quite idiotic."

"Never mind, never mind, Tsarevitch," rejoined Tolstoi hastily. He drew up a table and brought out paper, pen and ink.

"I will dictate, all you have to do is to write——"

"Will he be able to write?" Tolstoi suddenly inquired of the physician with a look in which the latter thought he saw the inexorable eyes of the Tsar.

Blumentrost shrugged his shoulders, and murmuring to himself "Barbarians!" he took the bandage off the patient's right hand.

Tolstoi began to dictate. The Tsarevitch wrote with difficulty in trembling characters; several times he was obliged to stop; he almost fainted with weakness and the pen often slipped from his fingers. Blumentrost was obliged to give him some medicine to revive him. But Tolstoi's words acted as an even greater stimulant:

"You shall see Afrossinia. Perhaps you will be pardoned, and even be allowed to marry her. Only write, write!"

And the Tsarevitch set himself again to the task.

"On June 22, 1718, I replied in the following terms to the questions which were laid before me by M. Tolstoi:—

"(1) My insubordination towards my father is explained by the fact that I have been brought up by ignorant women who sought only to amuse me: they made a fanatic of me, a state of mind towards which I was by temperament already disposed. My father, anxious for me to receive instruction worthy of a prince, desired me to apply myself to the study of German and the sciences, but such study was hateful to me. I worked most lazily, simply to while away the time. Since my father was often absent on campaigns of prolonged periods the people around me, observing that I took pleasure in talking to priests and monks and also that I had an inclination for wasting time in drinking, far from keeping me back, themselves encouraged me and took part in these visits and drinking bouts. Thus they estranged me more and more from my father, and, by degrees, not only his military and other exploits, but his very presence became utterly repugnant to me.

"(2) My reckless defiance of and contempt for all punishment are the outcome of my naturally bad disposition; of this I am fully aware. Though I feared my father, my fear was not of the kind which should be present in the relation of a son to a father.

"(3) I can easily explain why I sought to obtain power otherwise than by submission to my father. Since I had abandoned the right path and would not imitate my father in anything, I was compelled, in order to obtain power, to have recourse to foreign aid. And if events had brought it to pass that the Emperor had given me, in fulfilment of his promise, the support of his army to enable me to gain the Russian crown by conquest, then I, indifferent to everything else, would have acted as follows. Should the Emperor have asked of me in return Russian troops to help him against his own foes, or even a large sum of money, I should have done as he wished, as well as liberally rewarded his ministers and generals. And I would have taken upon myself to provide for his troops which he would have supplied me for the purpose of winning the Russian crown; in short I would have spared nothing to gain my end.

"ALEXIS."

Only when he had signed the statement did he suddenly recover as if from a trance and realise what he had done. He would have cried out that it was all false and have snatched the paper away and destroyed it ; but tongue and limbs refused to act, he was like those who have been buried alive and who hear and feel everything, yet cannot move in the lethargy of their death-like sleep. Speechless and motionless he watched Tolstoi fold the paper and put it in his pocket.

On the ground of this last confession, which was read in the Senate on June 24, the High Court made the following decree :—

“ We the undersigned ministers, senators, officers of the crown, military and civil, after mature deliberation following the dictates of conscience and taking our stand upon the divine commandment embodied in the Old and New Testaments, in the Holy Gospels, in the Acts, canons and rules of assemblies of the Holy Fathers and Teachers of the Church, and in like manner also upon the statutes of the Roman, Greek and other Christian emperors, as well as upon the law of Russia, have unanimously and without contradiction agreed and passed sentence that the Tsarevitch Alexis, culpable of revolt against his father, the Tsar, whose Empire he coveted ever since his childhood and desired to grasp it with the help of rebels and foreign sovereigns and troops, which would have brought complete ruin upon the country,—is worthy of death.”

CHAPTER VI

THAT very day the Tsarevitch was again led to the torture. After he had received fifteen blows with the knout he was taken down from the strappado, as Blumentrost declared that the Tsarevitch was in a fainting condition and would die under any further infliction of the knout.

In the night his condition became so much worse that the officer on guard in alarm ran to inform the commandant of the fortress that the Tsarevitch was dying, and that a priest ought to be summoned lest he should pass away without the last rites of the Church. The commandant at once despatched the priest of the garrison, Father Matthew. The latter at first resisted and entreated the commandant :—

“Excuse me this office, your Honour ! I am but a novice in such matters as these. It is dreadful to touch anything wherein the Tsar is concerned. Once in the trap there will be no means of getting out of it again. I have a wife and children. Have mercy on me ! ”

The commandant promised to take all the responsibility upon himself, and Father Matthew went with a heavy heart, sorely against his own inclination.

The Tsarevitch lay unconscious ; his mind was wandering, he did not recognize anybody.

Suddenly he opened his eyes and stared at Father Matthew.

“Who are you ? ”

“The priest of the garrison, Father Matthew. I have been sent to receive your confession.”

“To receive my confession ? Why do you bear a calf’s

head on your shoulder?— and shaggy hair upon that moon face of yours, and horns upon your forehead? ”

Father Matthew remained silent, his eyes fixed on the ground.

“ Do you desire to confess, my lord Tsarevitch,” he asked at last with a timid hope that the Tsarevitch would refuse.

“ Are you acquainted, Father, with the Tsar’s ukase, by which all treason or seditious plot, of which confession has been made to a priest, has to be revealed to the secret chancery? ”

“ I know it, your Highness.”

“ And should I reveal to you something of this kind in my confession would you betray me? ”

“ How could I help it? we are no longer masters of our actions. I have a wife and children.” murmured Father Matthew, with the despairing thought, “ this is a good beginning! ”

“ Away, get away from me, blockhead! ” exclaimed the Tsarevitch in a fury. “ You slave of the Russian Tsar! Sold, sold, all of you, down to the last man! You were once eagles, you have become as oxen bowed under the yoke! You have delivered the Church over to Antichrist! I will die unconfessed, and I will receive no sacrament from your hands. You viper’s brood! You incarnations of Satan! ”

Father Matthew recoiled in horror. His hands trembled so violently that he almost dropped the vessel which contained the Host.

The Tsarevitch glanced at it and repeated the words of the Raskolnik monk:—

“ Do you know what your Lamb can be likened unto? It can be likened unto a dead dog which has been cast into the streets of the city. If you receive the Host you will die. Your Eucharist has the same effect as arsenic or sublimate: it permeates bone and marrow, the very soul itself! Afterwards you will lie and groan in the Gehenna of fire, like Cain the fratricide, the hardened sinner— You would like to poison me, but I will not give you the chance! ”

Father Matthew fled from the room.

The black were-wolf leapt upon the neck of Alexis, and began to strangle him, and to pluck at his heart with its claws.

"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" he moaned in mortal anguish.

All at once he felt that near his bed, on the spot occupied a moment ago by Father Matthew, another person was now seated. He opened his eyes to see.

He beheld a small white-haired old man, whose head was inclined in such a way as to make it impossible for Alexis to discern his features. The old man partly resembled Father John, the Sacristan of the Church of the Annunciation at Moscow, and in some way also the centenarian beekeeper, whom Alexis had once met in the depth of the Novgorod woods, who used to spend his days among the hives, basking in the sun, his hair white as snow, and bearing ever about himself the scent of honey and wax. His name, too, was John.

"Are you Father John, or the old greybeard?" asked the Tsarevitch.

"I am John, yes John," said the old man kindly with a gentle smile, and his voice was low and murmuring like the humming of bees or the sound of distant chimes. The Tsarevitch felt awed and yet soothed by this voice. He tried to see the old man's face but could not.

"Fear not, fear not, my child!" continued the voice in yet sweeter and lower tones. "The Lord hath sent me to you! He will Himself soon be here!"

The old man raised his head and thereupon the Tsarevitch saw a face full of the grace of celestial youth, and recognised John, the Son of Thunder.

"Christ is risen, Aliosha!"

"Truly, he is risen!" answered the Tsarevitch, and a great and strange radiance of joy filled his soul as on that night in Trinity church during the celebration of the Easter Matins.

John seemed to hold the sun in his hands: it was the chalice containing the Body and Blood of Christ.

"In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit!"

He it was who administered the communion to the

Tsarevitch. The sun became light within him, and he felt there was neither grief nor fear, neither pain nor death, but only eternal life, eternal Light—the Christ.

Who was that healing ministrant, that John, the Son of Thunder, that little white-haired old man, of a countenance so full of peace?

He will appear again in this book, He will appear to another sufferer, who amongst the poor folk of this great Russian people, was seeking in lowly life, what Alexis the Tsarevitch was seeking near the throne.

CHAPTER VII

BLUMENTROST was amazed when he examined the patient in the morning; the fever had gone down, and the wounds were healing up. The change for the better was so sudden that it almost seemed miraculous.

"Thank the Lord, thank the Lord!" rejoiced the German, "there is hope for a recovery now!"

All through the day the Tsarevitch felt well; an expression of serene joy did not leave his face.

At noon his death sentence was read to him.

He remained calm during the reading, blessed himself with the sign of the cross, and asked when it would be put into execution. He was told that the day had not yet been fixed. His dinner was brought in. He ate with a good appetite; then asked for the window to be opened.

The day was fresh and sunny as in spring. The wind carried a scent of water and grass. Under the window, among the cracks of the prison wall, dandelions were flowering.

Alexis looked for a long while out of the window. Swallows darted past it with joyous twitter. The sky had never appeared to him so blue and deep as now, when viewed through the iron bars of the prison window.

Towards evening the sun caught the white wall at the head of the couch. Alexis imagined he saw the white-haired old man with the young face, the gentle smile, holding a chalice radiant as the sun.

He fell asleep with this vision; it was a long time since he had slept so peacefully.

On the morrow, Thursday, June 26, at eight in the morning, Ménskihoff, Tolstoi, Dolgorouki, Shafiroff, Apraksin and other ministers assembled in the torture

chamber. The Tsarevitch was so weak, that he had to be carried from his cell.

Again he was questioned: "What more have you to say? Have you concealed anything, or kept any names back?" He did not reply.

He was raised upon the strappado. Nobody knew how many blows he received, nobody counted them.

After the first blows he suddenly grew quiet, neither groaned nor moaned; his body became rigid. He did not lose consciousness; his gaze remained bright, his face calm; yet there was something about him which terrified even those men so used to the sight of suffering.

"He must not be beaten any more, your Majesty," whispered Blumentrost to the Tsar. "He may die of it. Besides, it is quite useless; he can feel nothing, he is in a state of catalepsy——"

"What?" asked the Tsar in astonishment.

"Catalepsy is a state——" Blumenbrost began to explain.

"You are in a catalepsy yourself, you fool!" cried Peter and turned away.

The executioner had stopped for a moment to take breath.

"Don't dawdle! flog!" ordered the Tsar. The man resumed his work. Yet to the Tsar it seemed his blows were less hard, out of pity for the Tsarevitch. Peter thought he saw pity and indignation on all faces.

"Flog, flog!" Peter started up and stamped with his foot. All looked at him with terror: he seemed to have gone out of his mind.

"Strike as hard as you can! or have you forgotten how flogging is done?"

"I strike; how else should I strike?" Kondrashka grumbled in an undertone, and again he stopped. "I do my work in the Russian way; I have not learnt it from the foreigners. I am an Orthodox. It is so easy to commit a crime. So easy to kill. See he scarcely breathes, poor fellow! He is not a beast after all, but a Christian!"

The Tsar rushed towards the man.

"You just wait, you devil's son; I will teach you how to strike!"

"Do what pleases you, your Majesty." He looked askance at the Tsar.

Peter snatched the knout from his hands. All hurried up towards the Tsar to stop him, but too late. He had already raised the knout and struck his son with all his might. The blows, though from an unskilled hand, were yet so terrific, that it seemed they would break the very bones.

The Tsarevitch turned round and looked at his father, as though wanting to say something. Peter remembered the gaze of the Saviour's face, surrounded by a crown of thorns, as portrayed on the ancient icon, before which he, Peter, had once prayed, oblivious of the Son, direct to the Father, and asked with dread: "What is the meaning of Father and Son?" And again a bottomless chasm yawned at his feet, so deep and fearful, that his hair stood on end.

He overcame this dread, raised heavily the knout once more; but he felt it stick to his fingers; it was slippery with blood; he threw it away in disgust.

All surrounded the Tsarevitch; he was taken off the strappado and laid on the ground.

Peter approached his son.

The Tsarevitch lay with his head thrown back; his lips were parted as with a smile; his face was bright, pure and young like that of a boy of fifteen. He continued to gaze at his father, with a look which indicated he wanted to say something to him.

Peter knelt, bent over his son and embraced his head.

"It is nothing, nothing, dearest," murmured Alexis, "I am all right. All is well. God's will be done!"

The father kissed him on the lips; but Alexis had already grown weak and lay heavy in Peter's arms; his eyes had become dim, his gaze lost its clearness.

Peter rose. His feet trembled.

"Will he die?" he asked Blumentrost.

"He may live till the evening," the doctor replied.

The Tsar was surrounded by dignitaries and led out of the chamber.

Peter had suddenly broken down, he was quiet and obedient as a child; he went wherever he was led, and did as he was bidden.

Tolstoi, noticing the Tsar's hands were bloody, ordered a hand bowl to be brought. Peter submissively washed his hands. The water became ruddy.

He was taken outside the fortress, and rowed in a small boat to the palace.

Tolstoi and Ménshikoff were careful not to leave the Tsar. To distract and occupy him, they discussed various indifferent affairs. He listened calmly and replied reasonably. He issued decrees, and signed papers. Afterwards he never could remember what he had done that day. It was as though he had spent it in a trance or a swoon. He did not talk about his son ; he seemed to have forgotten him.

At last about six o'clock in the evening, when Tolstoi and Ménshikoff were informed that the Tsarevitch was dying, they were obliged to remind the Tsar of him. He listened to them with an absent air, as though not realizing what they were talking about. Nevertheless he went in a boat to the fortress.

The Tsarevitch had been removed from the torture chamber to his cell. He did not regain consciousness.

The Tsar, accompanied by his ministers, entered the room of the dying man. When it was known that Alexis had not yet had the last rites of the Church administered to him, all became agitated and flurried. The priest of the Cathedral, Father George, was sent for. He came running along with the same frightened expression as the rest. He prepared for the sacrament, went through a dumb confession, mumbled the absolution, ordered the head of the dying man to be raised, and brought to his lips the spoon with the Host. But the lips remained closed, the teeth fast set ; the golden spoon knocked against them, for the hand of Father George was trembling. Drops of the sacred wine fell on the cloth. Consternation was on the face of every one.

Suddenly Peter's immovable face flushed with anger. He went up to the priest and said :—

“Leave it alone. It is unnecessary.”

And it seemed to him (or was it our fancy ?) that his son smiled to him his last smile.

At the same hour as on the eve, on the same spot, at the

head of the bed, the sun caught the white prison wall :
A white old man was holding a chalice radiant as the sun.

The sunlight faded. The Tsarevitch sighed like a child
who 's falling asleep.

Blumentrost felt his pulse, then whispered something
to Ménshikoff. The latter blessed himself with the sign
of the cross and pronounced in a solemn voice :—

“ His Highness, the Tsarevitch Alexis Petrovitch, has
passed away.”

All knelt except the Tsar. He remained motionless.
His face was more white and lifeless than his son's face.

CHAPTER VIII

“ALL things will end one day in Russia by some fearful revolution ; the Autocracy will fall, because millions of people cry out to God against the Tsar,” wrote the Hanoverian resident, Weber, from Petersburg, announcing the death of the Tsarevitch.

“The Crown Prince died, not of apoplexy, as is officially stated, but of a sword or axe,” wrote Pleyer to his Emperor. “No one was admitted to the fortress the day of his death, and just before evening it was locked up. A Dutch carpenter, who worked on the new tower of the Cathedral and who had remained there for the night unnoticed, saw, towards evening, strange men near the torture chamber ; this workman told it to his mother-in-law, who is the midwife at the Dutch resident’s. The body of the Crown Prince was laid in a coffin of inferior make ; the head was partly covered, while a neckerchief was wound round the neck as for shaving.”

The Dutch resident, James de Bie, reported to the States General, that the Tsarevitch had had his veins opened, and that a rebellion was expected in Petersburg.

The Resident’s letters were opened at the post office and presented to the Tsar. James de Bie was arrested, brought to the ambassador’s chancery and questioned. The Dutch carpenter and his mother-in-law were also taken into custody.

To refute all rumours, a circular was drawn up by Tolstoi, Shafiroff and Ménshikoff, and was sent in the Tsar’s name to the Russian residents at foreign courts :—

“After the pronouncement of the verdict on our son, we, his father, assailed by pity on the one side, and the desire to assure our country’s peace on the other, could

not come to a decision all at once, in this highly difficult and important matter. Yet it pleased God Almighty, whose judgments are always just, to deliver the Sovereign, his house, and the empire from all danger and blame by means of His all-divine goodness. Yesterday, on June 26, our son Alexis was taken from this life; when the verdict and the list of crimes he had committed against us and the empire, were being read to him, the Tsarevitch was seized with a kind of apoplexy.

“He recovered consciousness and had, according to Christian usage, the last rites of the Church administered to him; he also asked us to come to him; and we, disregarding the trouble he had caused us, went to him with all our ministers and senators. He confessed all his faults and crimes against us, shedding abundant tears of repentance, and asked for pardon, which we, conscious of our Christian and parental duty, readily granted him. Thus, on June 26, at 6 in the evening, he died as a Christian.”

On June 27, the day after the death of Alexis, the ninth anniversary of Poltava was celebrated in the usual way. The standard, a black eagle on a yellow field, was hoisted on the fortress; mass was said at the cathedral, cannons saluted, and a banquet was held in the Post Office Court in the daytime, while at night the revels were continued on the gallery overlooking the Neva, in the Summer Gardens at the foot of Venus.

It said in the report that the merry-making was great, the music sweet as the sighings of love in the kingdom of Venus.

'Tis time to cast thy bow away,
Cupid, we all are in thy sway!

That same night the body of the Tsarevitch was laid in a coffin and removed from the cell into a large empty log-built hall in the fortress.

In the morning it was carried into the cathedral, and permission was given to the people, without distinction of rank or position, to come up to the coffin, see the body, and take leave of the Tsarevitch.

Sunday, June 29, was another holiday—the Tsar's name's day. Again mass was said, cannons saluted,

church bells rang ; dinner was served in the Summer Palace ; in the evening a new frigate, *The Old Oak*, was launched from the Admiralty dockyards ; an orgie took place ; at night fireworks were burnt and again there was great merry-making.

The funeral of the Tsarevitch was fixed on Monday, June 30. The ceremony was very solemn. Stephen, Metropolitan of Riazan ; Feofan, Bishop of Pskoff ; six more bishops, two metropolitans from Palestine, archimandrites, priests, hiero-monks, archdeacons and eighteen ordinary priests officiated. The Tsar, the Tsaritsa, the ministers and senators, all high officials, military and civil, were present. Innumerable crowds surrounded the church.

The coffin, covered with black velvet, stood on a high catafalque under a canopy of golden brocade. Four officers of the Preobrazhensky Guards with drawn swords formed a guard of honour.

Many of the dignitaries had headaches from last night's drinking bout ; the old buffoons' songs were still ringing in their ears :—

My mother bare me while she danced,
And christened me in the Tsar's tavern——

The dim flames of candles and the subdued funeral singing seemed singularly sombre on this bright summer's day.

"Let the soul of Thy servant, O Christ, rest in peace with the saints, where there is neither sickness, nor sorrow, nor sighings, but life everlasting."

The deacon responded in a monotone :—

"We pray for the soul of the departed servant of God, Alexis. May every transgression, voluntary and involuntary, be forgiven him."

The choir chanted :——

"The sobs of those who bewail the dead are : Hallelujah !——"

In the crowd some one burst into sobs ; a tremor passed through the church, when the last verse was sung :—

"You who see me voiceless and lifeless come hither, You who love me, give me the last kiss."

The Metropolitan Stephen was the first to approach the coffin. The old man could scarcely walk. Two deacons supported him. He kissed the Tsarevitch on his head and hands, then bending over the coffin he gazed for a long time at his face. The Metropolitan Stephen was burying with Alexis all he loved; ancient Muscovy, the Patriarchate, the freedom and grandeur of the ancient church; his last hope, the hope of old Russia.

After the clergy, the Tsar ascended the steps of the catafalque. His face was as white and impassive as it had been all these latter days. He looked at his son. The countenance of the Tsarevitch was bright and young. It seemed to have grown even brighter and younger since his death. His smile was saying, "All is well! God's will be done!"

Something twitched and trembled in Peter's immovable face; something seemed to be struggling forth with great effort. At last it succeeded. The face became re-animated, radiant, as though illumined by the light coming from the dead man's countenance.

Peter bent down to his son and pressed his lips on the cold lips. Then he lifted his eyes towards heaven—all saw he was weeping—made the sign of the cross and said:—

"God's will be done!"

He knew now that his son would justify him before God's throne, and would explain to him there what he could not fathom here: the meaning of "Father" and "Son."

CHAPTER IX

IT was announced to the people, precisely as it had been to foreign courts, that the Tsarevitch had died of apoplexy.

But the Russian people did not believe it. Some asserted he had died under his father's blows ; others shook their heads dubiously, as much as to say, " the affair went off too quickly to be quite straightforward." Others again maintained that the Tsarevitch had not died ; ; that an officer of the Guards who resembled him had been buried in his stead, while he himself had fled from his father, away to the monasteries beyond the Volga, or else to the Cossacks in the steppes beyond the " free rivers," where he was in hiding.

A few years later, there appeared, among the Yamen Cossacks, a certain Timofée, the Worker ; who looked like a mendicant, and when asked his name and whence he came, he would say :—

" From the clouds, from the air. The staff is my father ; the wallet my mother. My name is Worker, because I am working at a great work of God's."

At times he would secretly say about himself :—

" I am neither a moujik, nor a moujik's son ; I am an eagle and the son of an eagle ; an eagle I shall be ! I am the Tsarevitch, Alexis Petrovitch. I have the mark of a cross on my back and that of a sword on my thigh——"

So people said about him :—

" He is not an ordinary being ; he will one day make the earth tremble

In the anonymous letters he used to distribute among the Cossacks, it was said :—

" Blessed be our God ! We, Alexis Petrovitch, are going

to reclaim our ancestral rights; we count upon you Cossacks, as on a stone wall, to help us protect the Old Faith and the people. And you, burlaks, shelterless, barefooted poor folk, whenever you hear our call, hasten, day and night, to rejoin us."

The "Worker" went through the steppes collecting an army, promising to discover a city which held the insignia of the Virgin Mary, the gospel, the cross, and the standards of Alexander of Macedonia; then he, the Tsarevitch Alexis Petrovitch, will reign, and when at the end of the world Antichrist appears, he will wage war against him and all his armies of evil spirits.

The "Worker" was arrested, put to the torture and had his head cut off as a pretender.

But the people went on believing that the Tsarevitch Alexis Petrovitch would come in his own good time, that he would take his place on the ancestral throne, have all the boyars executed and be gracious unto the poor common folk.

Thus, even after his death, Alexis remained for the people, "Russia's Hope."

CHAPTER X

AFTER he had brought to an end the investigations connected with his son's trial, Peter left Petersburg for Reval on August 8, at the head of a fleet, consisting of twenty-two men-of-war. The Tsar was on board the new ninety-gun frigate, *The Old Oak*, which had only quite recently been launched from the Admiralty dock-yard. This was the first ship which had been built according to the Tsar's own designs, by Russian workmen, from Russian wood, without the help of foreigners.

One evening, as they were passing out of the Finnish Gulf into the Baltic Sea, Peter stood at the helm and steered.

The weather was bad. Black, heavy iron clouds massed over the black, heavy, also as it were, iron waves. It was rough. The sea was fretted with hoary surge, suggesting the pale arm of menacing phantoms. At times the waves would wash over the ship and a shower of salt water would drench all those upon deck, the Tsar-helmsman most of all. His clothes were wet through; the cold icy wind cut his face. Yet nevertheless he felt, as he usually did when on the sea, vigorous, strong and joyous.

With his gaze fixed on the gloomy distance he piloted the vessel with a firm hand. The huge body of the frigate trembled under the pressure of the waves, yet *The Old Oak* was strong and obeyed the rudder like a good horse obeys the bridle; she was tossed from wave to wave; sometimes the colourless deep would all but engulf her, it seemed well-nigh impossible for her to come up again; yet every time she reappeared—triumphant.

Peter was thinking about his son. For the first time he thought about all that had happened as belonging to the past. There was infinite sadness in his reflections, but no dread, no anguish, no repentance. He felt here,

also, just as all through his life, the manifestation of the divine will.

He remembered his son's words addressed to the Senate :
" Peter is great, very great, but he is heavy, he crushes. The earth groans under the burden."

How else could it be ? thought Peter. The anvil groans under the hammer. He, the Tsar, was only the hammer with which God was forging Russia. He had roused her with a massive blow ; but for him Russia would be still sunken in a deep sleep.

And what would have happened had the Tsarevitch remained alive ?

Sooner or later he would have come to the throne, and returned the power to the priests, the monks, the " long-beards," and they would have turned away from Europe back to Asia, extinguished the light of civilization, and Russia would have slowly crumbled and perished.

Peter had founded the new empire ; but he had knowingly sealed that foundation-stone in the blood of Alexis, his son.

" There will be a storm," said the old Dutch captain, approaching the Tsar.

Peter made no answer and continued to gaze into the distance.

Darkness was swiftly approaching. The black clouds descended lower and lower towards the black waves.

Suddenly, at the very edge of the sky, the sun peered through a narrow cleft from under the clouds ; it seemed as if blood was gushing from a wound. The iron clouds and waves became flushed as with blood. Wonderful and terrible was the aspect of this sea of blood.

" Blood ! Blood ! " thought, Peter, and to his mind came his son's prophecy.

" You are the first to stain the block with the blood of a son, the blood of Russia's Tsars ; this blood shall descend upon successive generations of thy lineage unto the last Tsar ; all will perish in blood. God will visit your sin upon Russia ! "

" Not this, O Lord ! " again, as on that night before the ancient icon, portraying a dark face surrounded by a crown of thorns, Peter was praying direct to the Father

who sacrificed His Son. "Let it not be so! Let his blood come upon me, me alone! Punish me, O God! Spare Russia!"

"There will be a storm," repeated the old captain; thinking the Tsar had not heard him. "I advised your Majesty to return——"

"Never fear," answered Peter with a smile. "Our new ship is strong; she will weather this gale. God is with us."

And with a firm hand the helmsman steered his vessel across the blood-red waves towards the unknown.

The sun had set; it grew dark, the storm began to howl.



Epilogue

THE COMING CHRIST

CHAPTER I

“OUR faith is not the true one ; it is not worth perishing for. Oh could I but find the true faith, I would let my body be cut to pieces for it !”

Tichon often remembered these words while on his long wanderings after he had fled from Cornelius and the Red Death : they were the words of a wanderer, too ; one who had tried all creeds and accepted none.

Once, late in the autumn, after his flight from the priests of the Vetlouga, Tichon was resting at the Pestchersky monastery in Nishni Novgorod, doing the duties of a copyist, one of the monks, Father Nicodemus, talking with him about religion, said :—

“I know what you need, my son. Wise people are living in Moscow. They possess the water of life. Having once drunk of it, you will never thirst again. Go to them. Should you be found worthy, they will reveal to you a great mystery.”

“What mystery ?” Tichon asked eagerly.

“Don’t be so hasty, my son,” retorted the monk with kindly severity. “The more haste the less speed. If you really desire to be initiated in that mystery, accept the trial of silence. Whatever you hear or see, keep it to yourself. You know the prayer : ‘I will not deliver your secret to the enemy, I will not give you the kiss of Judas.’ Do you understand ?”

“I understand, Father ; I will be as silent.”

“Good,” continued Father Nicodemus. “I will give you a letter to the Moscow flour merchant, Saphiannikoff. Take him my greetings, and, as a humble gift from me, a small barrel of smoked cloud-berries. We are old

friends; he will receive you. You are skilled in book-keeping and he will employ you in his shop. Will you go now, or wait until the spring? Winter will soon be here, and your clothes are but poor. You might easily get frozen to death."

"I will go now, Father, at once!"

"Well, God speed your journey, my son."

Father Nicodemus gave Tichon his blessing and the promised letter, which he allowed him to read:—

"To my beloved brother in Christ, Parphen Paramonitch, grace be unto thee. The bearer of this letter is the youth Tichon. He is no longer satisfied with stale bread, he craves for savoury cakes to satisfy his hunger. Peace be unto you all, and grace from our Lord.

"The humble Father Nicodemus."

Tichon started for Moscow with a cart-load of fish, as soon as the winter roads could be depended on.

Saphiannikoff's flour stores were at the corner of the third Mieshanski Street and the small Suhareff Square.

In spite of the letter from Father Nicodemus, Tichon was received not without suspicion. For a trial he was appointed to assist the house-porter in heavy manual work. When they found he did not drink, but worked well and knew how to cast figures up correctly, he was taken into the shop, and entrusted with the account books.

There was nothing special about this shop. There was buying, selling, and talks about gain and loss. Only now and then, in corners, mysterious whispers were exchanged.

One day, Mitka the porter, an awkward kindly giant, white with flour dust, while removing the flour sacks, began to sing in Tichon's presence a strange song:—

Once in holy Russia,
Stonewalled mother Moscow,
In the street Mestchanskaia,
Two dear friends encountered,
Both radiant as the sun.
Low bowed Ivan Timofeyevitch,
Salutes his friend, the other—Daniel Philipovitch,
"Welcome to my palace,
Welcome to my table
To eat bread and salt.
I have longed to hear thee say
What thy designs are for the Judgment Day."

"Mitka, Mitka, who are they? Daniel Philipovitch and Ivan Timofeyevitch?" asked Tichon.

Taken by surprise, Mitka stopped short, bending under the weight of a large sack, his eyes expressing great amazement:—

"Don't you know the God Sabaoth and Christ!"

"How can the Lord Sabaoth and Christ be said to meet in Mestchanskaia Street?" continued Tichon with increasing surprise.

But Mitka already realized he had said too much and went off, growling in a gloomy voice:—

"Much knowledge will make you old before your time."

Soon after this Mitka fell ill. He had probably strained himself with lifting the heavy sacks. For days he lay in his underground room, moaning and groaning. Tichon went to see him, gave him sage-brandy to drink and rubbed him with camphorated spirit and other medicaments, obtained from a friendly German apothecary. It was damp in the cellar and Tichon removed Mitka to his own warm bright room over the main storehouse. Mitka was affectionate. He became attached to Tichon, and began to talk more openly with him.

Tichon gathered from these talks and Mitka's songs, that at the beginning of the reign of Tsar Alexis Michailovitch, in the Murom district, before a great crowd of people, the Lord Sabaoth, surrounded by angels, archangels Cherubim and Seraphim, had come down from heaven in a fiery chariot. The angels returned to heaven, the Lord remained and entered the pure body of Daniel Philipovitch, a soldier deserter, declaring the peasant Ivan Timofeyevitch to be his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and they set out wandering through the world in the guise of two beggars.

Escaping from persecutors they suffered cold and hunger; they were obliged to hide themselves in pig-sties, in fetid ditches, or to sleep under haystacks. One day a peasant woman concealed them in the cellar under a cattle shed. The cattle drainage from the floor oozed through into the cellar. Daniel Philipovitch on seeing it, said to Ivan Timofeyevitch: "You will get wet," and Ivan answered: "It is nothing, if only you, my king, remain dry."

They spent the last years of their lives in Moscow, on the Mestchanskaya Street, in a separate house, called "Zion." They both died there and in glory ascended into heaven.

After Ivan Timofeyevitch, the same as before him, many Christs revealed themselves, since the Lord resides nowhere more readily than in a pure human body. It is written: "Ye are the temples of the living God." God begets a Christ whenever the world is in danger of dying. Christ accomplished His work in one body and has begun it in several others.

"This means there are many Christs?" said Tichon.

"There is one spirit, Christ, yet the bodies in which He appears are many," replied Mitka.

"Is there a Christ now?" continued Tichon, his heart sinking in anticipation of a mystery.

Mitka assented with a nod.

"Where is He?"

"Do not question. I dare not answer. You will see for yourself, if you are found worthy."

Mitka would say no more.

"I will not deliver your secret to the enemy," remembered Tichon.

A few days later he was busy at his account books. It was Saturday evening. The shop was closed. A train of waggons had come, and men were carrying in the flour bags. The cold white air rushed in through the open door, footsteps sounded on the snow, the church bells were ringing. The snow-covered roofs of the weather-beaten log-houses, flushed with the evening glow, stood out against the golden purple of the sky. It was quite dark in the shop; only at the end, amidst the towering flour sacks the darkness was relieved by a lamp glimmering before the icon of St. Nicholas.

Saphiannikoff, a fat, white-haired old man, a veritable Father Christmas, and the chief clerk, Yemelian Retivoi, a corpulent red-haired, bald man, with the ugly intelligent face of a faun, were drinking hot "sbiten" and listening to Tichon's narrative about the settlers of Kerjenetz.

"And what is your opinion, Yemelian Ivanovitch?" asked Tichon, "where can salvation be found, in the old or the new books?"

"There once lived in Russia a man called Daniel Philipovitch," began Yemelian with a smile, "he read all the books, and finding little good in them, he gathered them all together in a bag and threw them into the Volga. Salvation lies neither in the old nor in the new books, but in

The Golden Book,
The Book of Life,
The Book of the Dove,
The Holy Ghost Himself."

the last words he sang in the same rhythm Mitka used for his strange songs.

"Where is that book?" asked Tichon in a shy eager voice.

"There, look!"

He pointed to the sky through the open door.

"That is the book; the Lord God Himself writes upon it with the golden words of eternal life. Having read them, you will fathom all mysteries in heaven and on earth."

Yemelian looked steadily at him, and Tichon felt thrilled by sudden fear, as though he had looked into some dark, transparent, bottomless pool.

Yemelian, exchanging glances with his master, suddenly stopped.

"Does this mean that salvation can be found neither in the old nor the new Church?" Tichon hastened to question, afraid lest Yemelian, like Mitka, would say no more.

"What is your Church?" Yemelian shrugged his shoulder in contempt. "An anthill, a dilapidated synagogue, a Jewish market! Its spiritual life has been lost in its rites and buildings. She used to be a spirit and a fire, but now she has become precious stones and gold, or icons and priests' palls. God's word has become stale, like old dry bread which breaks the teeth and cannot be chewed."

And leaning over to Tichon, he added in a whisper:—

"There is a true, mysterious, new church, a bright hall of Zion, whose framework is made of cypress, barberry and anise-wood. Not dry crusts, but soft fresh cakes, straight from the oven, are served out there; words of life out of the mouths of prophets. Heavenly joy abounds

in it, and spiritual drink about which the Church sings :
 'Come! and drink from the new, incorruptible spring
 which flows from the tomb of the living Christ!'"

"Ah, what a drink! there is no need to sip it, to look at it is sufficient," exclaimed Parfen Paramonitch, and raising his eyes, he began to chant in a quite unexpectedly high-pitched voice :—

God Himself has brewed the drink,
 The Holy Ghost has mingled it.

Yemelian and Mitka chimed in, beating time with their feet, twitching their shoulders, as if eager to whirl away in a dance. All three had a Bacchantic look in their eyes.

God Himself has brewed the drink,
 The Holy Ghost has mingled it,
 The Holy Virgin tapped it,
 Together with God they worked ;
 Holy angels, Cherubim,
 Took it round and carried it.

Tichon thought he could hear the stamping of many feet, the echo of a whirling frantic dance ; there was something wild, and *mœnad*-like in this song, which robbed one's breath and at the same time roused the longing to be ever listening to it.

All at once, as suddenly as they began, the three men stopped.

Yemelian started to look over the account books, Mitka lifted up the bag and went his way. Parfen Paramonitch passed his hand over his face, as if wiping something from it. He rose, yawned, stretched himself lazily, and crossing his mouth, said in his usual voice, as he was wont to say every night :—

"Go and have your supper, lads! the soup and kasha will be getting cold."

And again all became ordinary and common place.

Tichon, too, had risen, but all at once, as if impelled by some power, he fell on his knees, pale and trembling, stretched out his hand and cried :—

"Friends, have compassion on me! I can endure it no longer. My soul has worn itself out with longing for

the courts of the Lord! Accept me into your holy communion, unveil to me your great mystery!"

"See, see, how impatient the lad is!" Yemelian looked at him with his cunning smile, "You are too hasty, my friend. The Father has first to be asked. Perhaps you will be found worthy, but meanwhile remain silent."

They all went to supper, as if nothing had happened. Neither on the morrow nor on the following days was there any mention made of mysteries. Whenever Tichon ventured to allude to what had happened, the others remained silent and looked at him with suspicion. It was as if a curtain had been drawn up for a moment and then suddenly dropped again. Yet he could not forget what he had seen. He went about no longer his old self. What was said to him he did not understand; he answered wrongly and made mistakes in his accounts. The master scolded him. Tichon feared he would be dismissed.

The next Saturday, late at night, he was sitting alone in his room, when in came Mitka.

"Come," said he, in a hurried voice.

"Whither?"

"To see the Father."

Afraid to question, Tichon hurriedly dressed and came down. He saw his master's sleigh waiting at the door. In it sat Yemelian and Parfen Paramonitch, the latter wrapped in a fur coat. Tichon cowered at their feet, Mitka seated himself on the box and away they sped through the dark, deserted streets. The night was calm and bright. Pellucid, pearly cloudlets covered the moon. They crossed the river on the ice and for some time wound their way along the dark narrow lanes about Samoskvosetchia. At last the dull pink walls of the Donskoi Monastery, surmounted by white pinnacles and towers, appeared through the luminous gloom.

At the corner of the Donskoi and Shakelskoi Street they got out of the sleigh, and Mitka left the horse in a court. They continued their way on foot past old wooden fences banked with snow. Then they turned into a lane where the snow came almost up to their knees. On reaching a double gate, hung on iron hinges, they knocked. They

were only admitted after they had said who they were and whence they came. They stepped into a court surrounded by buildings. Yet with the exception of the gate-keeper nobody was visible, no light, not even the bark of a dog was heard—dead silence. On leaving the courtyard they continued their way along a narrow, well-used path, between two high banks of snow, across some back-yards : whether wastes or gardens it was difficult to say. Passing through a second gate, they entered an orchard ; the apple and cheery trees in their wintry dress seemed covered by white blossoms. The silence was so intense that they might have been a hundred miles away from human habitation. At the end of the garden rose a large wooden house. They went up to the door, knocked and again they were questioned. A stern-looking lad whose dress suggested a monastic novice admitted them. In the spacious hall, the walls, chests, and benches were covered with a number of overcoats, belonging to men and women : simple sheep-skins, rich fur coats, ancient Russian caps, new-fashioned hoods.

When they had taken off their coats, Yemelian thrice asked Tichon :—

“Dost thou desire, my son, to be initiated into God’s mystery ?”

And Tichon thrice answered :—

“I do.”

Yemelian blindfolded him and led him by the hand.

They went along endless corridors, now going down, now going up staircases.

At last they stopped. Yemelian ordered Tichon to undress, and then put on him a long linen tunic, on his feet cotton stockings, repeating the words from Revelation :—
“He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment.”

After this they continued their way. The last staircase was so steep that Tichon was obliged to grip with both hands Mitka’s shoulders, for fear of slipping.

They were met by a smell of damp earth, which seemed to issue from a cellar. A last door opened and they entered a heated apartment, where judging by the whispering and jostling of feet a large number were assembled. Yemelian made Tichon kneel, bow thrice to the ground and repeat the words he was whispering into his ear :—

"I swear by my soul, my God and His terrible last Judgment, to suffer the knout, the fire, the axe, the block, every torture, even death, rather than forsake the Holy Faith, and also to relate to no one, neither to my confessor nor my father, whatever I will hear or see here. I will not deliver thy secret to the enemy, nor give the kiss of Judas. Amen."

When he ended he was led to a bench and the bandage was removed from his eyes.

He saw a large low room; holy icons stood in the corner. Before them numerous lit tapers; the whitewashed wall was marked with dark spots of damp; water penetrated through the cracks between the black tarred planks.

The air was as close as in a vapour bath. Circles of iridescent light surrounded the flames of the candles, the benches along the walls were occupied by men on one side, and women on the other, and all were wearing the same white tunics, cotton stockings and no boots.

"The Queen, the Queen," they reverently whispered. The door opened and in came a tall, slender woman in a black dress with a white handkerchief on her head. All rose and bowed low to her.

"Akoulina Makejevna, the heavenly Queen," Mitka whispered to Tichon. The woman went up and sat down under the icons, herself resembling an icon. All began to go up to her and bow before her, kissing her knee.

Yemelian took Tichon to her and said:—

"Baptise him, mother. He is new."

Tichon knelt and looked at her: she was dark, no longer young, about forty, with little wrinkles in the corners near her dark eyelashes; her black thick eyebrows were almost grown together, and she had a slight black down on her upper lip, "quite like a Tzuigane or a Circassian," he thought. But when she looked at him with her large, soft, black eyes he realized how beautiful she was.

The Queen thrice made a sign of blessing him with a lit taper, almost touching his forehead, chest and shoulders with the flame.

"In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Tichon, the servant of God, is baptised with fire and the Holy Spirit!" Then with a quick, adroit, and evi-

dently accustomed movement, she opened her dress, and he saw her beautiful naked body, fresh as a young maiden's, amber coloured, as if carved from ivory.

Yemelian pushed him forward whispering :—

“ Kiss the holy womb, the pure breasts.”

Tichon cast his eyes to the ground in confusion.

“ Fear not, child ! ” said Akoulina, and such tenderness was in her voice that Tichon seemed to hear in it the voice of a mother, sister, and beloved all in one.

He remembered how, in the dark wood near the Round Lake, he had buried his head among the grass and kissed the earth, how looking up towards heaven, he had felt that the earth and the sky were one, and how weeping he had prayed :—

O wondrous Queen, Mother of God,
Earth, thou bountiful mother of all.

He reverently kissed the beautiful body thrice, like a holy image. A subtle scent rose from it ; a subtle smile flitted across her lips. This scent and the smile terrified him.

But the dress closed, and again she sat before him, majestic and severe, a saint,—an icon among icons.

When Tichon returned with Yemelian to their place the whole assembly began to sing in a melancholy drawn voice :—

Send us Lord Thy Christ,
Send us Lord Thy Son,
Send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.

For a moment they remained hushed ; and then the singing was renewed, but this time it was merry, quick, as if for a dance ; the people stamped with their feet, clapped with their hands, and their eyes had a look of ecstasy :—

On the river Don
Christ dwells in our homes,
With His Angels
And Archangels,
With cherubim
And seraphim,
And the holy host of Heaven.

Suddenly a venerable old man started from his seat,

his ascetic face resembled Holy Sergius, as he is painted on icons ; he ran out into the middle of the room and began to whirl round.

Then a young girl, about fourteen, quite a child, yet already pregnant, slender as a reed, with a neck long as the stalk of a flower, also started up and went round with the grace of a swan.

"That is Marioushka the idiot," said Yemelian, pointing to her, "she can hardly speak, mostly lows, but when filled with the spirit she sings like a nightingale."

The girl sang in a child-like silvery voice :—

'Tis enough for you to sit,
Time has come for the birds to flit,
From prison and cells,
And shadowy caverns.—

Her waving arms suggested wings.

Parfen Paramonitch ran up to Marioushka, took her by the hands and began to whirl her round and round, like a polar bear dancing with a snow fairy. Tichon would have never believed that this huge, portly body could dance with such ethereal lightness. Spinning round like a top he sang in his high-pitched voice :—

In the seventh heaven
Christ is spinning round.
Ah, friends ! ah, friends !
Christ has shoes
Made of Saphia leather,
Stitched with finest stitches.

Other people rose and began to spin round.

A man with a wooden leg went round as nimbly as the rest. Tichon was told afterwards that his name was Captain Smoorigin ; he had lost his leg at the storming of Azov.

A short fat lady with dignified gray curls, Princess Khovánsky, spun round like a ball. Next to her a loose-limbed cobbler was prancing, throwing his feet and arms about ; he twisted and twirled himself like a huge gnat, a "Daddy-long-legs," ejaculating from time to time :—

Dancing and burning,
On we go to Zion's hill !

By this time nearly all had joined the dance, not only singly but in pairs and groups representing "walls," "corners," "crosses," "David's ship," and "flowers," etc.

"The various figures," explained Yemelian to Tichon, "represent the dances of the heavenly hosts of angels and archangels round the throne of God; the waving of arms imitates the beating of angel's wings. The heavens and the earth are one; what happens there is enacted here also."

The dance grew more and more rapid; it seemed as if a whirlwind filled the room, and they were no longer dancing themselves, but some external power was whirling them round with such rapidity that their faces could no longer be discerned; the hair on the head stood upright, the tunics blew out like funnels, and men were transformed into white spinning columns. Some hissed, others cackled, others again screamed in frenzy, and again it seemed that not they themselves, but some external power was screaming through their mouths.

He has filled us, He has filled us,
Holy, Holy Spirit,
Fill us, fill us, fill us!

They fell on the ground in convulsions, with foaming mouths, like madmen; they prophesied, but for the most part it was impossible to make out what they meant. Some stopped short in exhaustion, their faces either crimson or deadly white. Sweat poured down them in streams; they mopped themselves with towels, wrung their drenched tunics out, making pools on the floor. And after a brief rest they recommenced their dance.

Suddenly the dancers stopped, and fell with their faces to the ground. A dead silence ensued, and again, as before the Queen's entry, a reverent whisper passed through the room.

"The King, the King!"

In came a man, of about thirty, arrayed in a long white semi-transparent gown. He had a feminine face, like that of Akoulina Makejevna. It was not Russian, yet of singular and winning beauty.

"Who is this?" asked Tichon.

"Christ, the Lord," answered Mitka, who lay next to him.

Tichon learnt afterwards that he was a runaway Cossack, Averian by name, the son of a Cossack and a captive Greek woman.

The King went up to the Queen, who respectfully rose before him, and embraced and kissed her three times.

Coming into the middle of the room, he stepped upon a little round platform, made of boards like those which cover springs.

Then all began to sing in a loud solemn voice :—

The seventh heaven opened,
A golden chariot descended,
Both golden and fiery.
The Holy Ghost Himself is driving,
His white horse is marvellous,
The tail is of strings of pearls,
Fire burns within its nostrils,
Its eyes are precious stones.
He descends, He descends,
Holy, Holy Spirit,
Come, come to us !

The King blessed his children, and again the dancing began, only more frenzied than ever ; the Queen at the end of the room, the King in the centre of the whirling circles, alone remained motionless. From time to time the King slowly raised his arms ; and every time the dance grew faster. Inhuman shrieks rose up :—

"Eva, Évoe ; Eva, Évoe !"

Tichon remembered reading in old Latin commentaries of Pausanias, that the ancient Bacchantes were supposed to greet the god Dionysus with almost the same sounding cries : "Evan, Evoie !" By what miracle did the mysteries of the dead god penetrate here, filtering by channels of subterranean waters, from the summit of Mount Cithaeron into this out-of-the-way corner of Moscow ?

He contemplated the white troop of whirling dancers and at times he lost consciousness. Time had stopped ; everything had vanished ; there was nothing but whiteness, a white abyss, into which white birds were falling. Nothing existed, he himself no longer existed. Only the white precipice,—the white death.

He recovered when Yemelian took him by the hand, saying:—"Let us go!"

Although the daylight did not penetrate into the cellar, Tichon felt that dawn was near. The burnt-down candles were smoking. The air was unbearably close and unpleasant. The pools of sweat on the floor were being mopped up with rags. The night watch had come to an end. The King and the Queen had gone out. Some of the people, groping their way towards the exit, crept along like stupefied flies. Others had fallen to the ground and lay as in a deep swoon. Others, again, hanging their heads sat on the benches with faces like drunkards taken with nausea. The white birds had fallen to earth, mortally wounded.

After that night Tichon did not miss a single meeting, Mitka taught him how to dance. At first he was shy, but he got used to it, and soon the dance became a necessity to him.

Each time new mysteries were revealed to him.

Yet it seemed that the essential and most terrible mystery was as yet concealed. From what he saw and heard he gathered that the brethren and sisters lived in carnal intercourse.

"We Cherubin and angels, live in purity of the fire," said they. "There is no sin, when a brother and sister of the faith live together in true, christian love; but vile and sinful is the wedlock sanctified by the Church. Before God it is vile; before men insolent. A husband and wife are the abode of the devil; children are unclean brats."

Children born of husbands not belonging to this sect were exposed by their mothers in public baths, or else strangled.

One day Mitka naïvely told Tichon that he lived with his own two sisters, both nuns; while Yemelian, a teacher and prophet, had thirteen wives.

Whoever confessed to him had become his mistress. Tichon was naturally troubled by these unspeakable revelations. For some days he avoided Yemelian, and dared not look into his face. Yemelian noticed this confusion, and said to him when alone:—

"Listen, young man, I will reveal to you a great mystery.

If you wish to live, mortify for God's sake, not only your body, but your soul, your reason, even your conscience. Free yourself of (all rule and law), of all virtue, of fasting, abstinence, virginity. Discard all sanctity. Descend into yourself, as into a tomb. Then, mysteriously dead, you will rise and the Holy Spirit will dwell within you and will not leave you whatever you do."

Yemelian's ugly face, the faun-mask, lit up with such sly audacity that great fear possessed Tichon; he asked himself whether he was in the presence of a prophet or a madman.

"You are scandalised to see us commit what ordinary people call immorality. We know that we do not conform to your code of morality. Yet how can we help it? We have no will of our own. The spirit works in us and our most frantic actions are the mysterious results of God's providence. To quote my own case, my conscience does not accuse me for living with women; on the contrary it fills my heart with inexpressible joy and sweetness. Should an angel come down from heaven and tell me, 'Your life is evil, Yemelian,' I would not listen to him. My God has justified me, and who are you to judge. You know my sin, but you ignore God's grace towards me. You tell me 'Repent,' and I answer, 'I have nothing to repent of!' He who has reached the goal, does not trouble about the way he has come. If you banish us to Hell, we shall be saved even there; send us to Paradise, we shall not find there greater joy than here. We are immersed in the Spirit as a stone in water. Yet we have to conceal ourselves; we assume guilelessness to prevent discovery. That's our position, my child."

Yemelian looked at Tichon with an ambiguous smile, and the latter experienced that same sensation which the dance roused in him: the sensation of whirling flight. But whither? Whether up to God or down to the devil he knew not.

One night during the week preceding Palm Sunday, the Queen distributed small branches of palms and holy scourges, made of narrow twisted napkins. The brethren let down their tunics to the waist, the sisters lowered theirs, at the back down the waist, in front to their bosom,

and they all began to spin round, beating themselves with the scourges and the palms. Some were singing :—

Serve the Lord,
Despise your bodies,
Serve the Lord,
Despise Martha.

Others chanted in a whistling tone :—

The lash whizzes through the air !
We are seeking Christ !

Many were beating themselves with bullets tied in rags, like slings ; others were cutting themselves with knives, blood was flowing. Looking at the King, they all shouted :
“Eva. Évoe ! Eva, Évoe !”

Tichon flogged himself with his scourge, and under the tender gaze of Akoulina, who appeared to be looking at him alone, the pain became more and more pleasant. Like wax before fire, so his body seemed to melt in voluptuousness ; he wished to melt and burn away before the Queen, like a candle before an icon.

The lights now began to go out, one after another, as if the whirl of the dance were blowing them out. Darkness ensued, and in the darkness (as in the chapel of the “Self-burners” on the eve of the Red Death) strange whispers, rustles, kisses and sighings of love were heard. Bodies interlaced ; they became in the vast darkness one immeasurable body. Eager and tenacious hands reached out after Tichon, caught hold of him and threw him down.

“Tichon, Tichon, darling, my bridegroom, my beloved Christ !” a passionate voice whispered to him. He recognized it as the Queen’s.

It seemed to him that some huge insects, male and female spiders, had rolled together and were devouring one another in loathsome lust.

He repulsed the Queen, leaped to his feet, and tried to escape. But at each turn he came upon naked persons, stepped on them, slipped, fell, and again rose. Meanwhile greedy and tenacious hands were clutching him, seeking to detain him, caressing him with obscene caresses. He grew weak and felt that he would soon sink into this terrible body of carnality, as if absorbed into the dark

warm mud of a hot swamp; that everything would be reversed, and that in this final fear he would attain ecstasy.

With desperate effort he disengaged himself, rushed forward, reached the door and caught hold of the handle. He tried to open it. It was locked. He fell to the ground exhausted. Here there were fewer persons than in the middle of the room, and he gained momentary rest.

Suddenly again, hands were touching him, little thin hands like those of a child. He heard the stuttering of Marioushka the idiot; she was vainly trying to speak. By degrees he caught several words.

"Come, come—— I will lead you out——" She dragged him by the hand. He felt a key in the hand of the girl; and followed her.

She led him along the walls to the icons. Here she stopped and made him do the same; then, raising a curtain which hung under the icon of Christ, she found a little door, a kind of trap-door, opened it, disappeared into it with the swiftness of a lizard. Tichon followed her. A subterranean passage led them to a staircase, familiar to Tichon. They ascended and entered the big room, where the worshippers changed their clothes. The moon was looking through the window and the white tunics hung on the walls resembled phantoms in its light.

When Tichon breathed the fresh air and saw through the window the blue sparkling snow and the stars, immense joy filled his soul. He pressed ecstatically the thin hand of Marioushka.

He noticed that she was no longer with child; and remembered Mitka saying a few days ago, that she had been delivered of a boy. The child was pronounced a little Christ, being born of the King by the will of the Holy Spirit, not from the flesh, nor the will of man, but by the will of God Himself.

Marioushka made Tichon sit down on a bench, placed herself next to him, and again with great effort tried to speak. But instead of words, all she could articulate was vague lowings of which he could make nothing. Finding that she could not make herself understood, she stopped and began to cry. He put his arm around her, and pressing her head against his bosom, he began to caress her soft

light hair, lighter still in the moonlight. She was trembling, and it seemed to him that a captive bird was fluttering in his arms.

At last she raised to him her large, limpid, dark blue eyes, two cornflowers beaded with dew, and smiled through her tears, started as if trying to catch a sound, straightened her neck, long, thin, like the stem of a flower, and suddenly in a clear, silvery voice—the voice she used to sing with in the night watches—she warbled into his ear. The stuttering had disappeared, the words half sung, half whispered had become distinct.

“Ah, Tichon, my friend, save me from the fiends. They will kill Ivanoushka——”

“What Ivanoushka?”

“My son, my poor little boy!”

“Why should they kill him?” said Tichon in bewilderment. She seemed to be speaking in a delirium.

“In order to partake of the living blood,” she whispered, nestling to him with infinite terror. “The little Christs they say, the stainless lambs, are born in order to be killed, to give themselves for holy food to the faithful. The child, they say, is not alive; he is but an appearance, a holy icon, an imperishable body, which can neither suffer nor die—but they lie, the accursed ones, I know it, I know it, Tichon. My son is alive. He is not a Christ, but Ivanoushka, my own darling! I will not deliver him to anybody. I would rather perish than give him up—. Oh, Tichon, save me from the enemy!”

Again the words became confused. At last she stopped, and leaning her head on his shoulder, she lost consciousness or else fell asleep.

Day began to break. Steps were heard behind the door. Marioushka started, as though ready to fly. They took leave of one another, Tichon promising to save Ivanoushka.

“Poor little fool,” he said, trying to calm himself. “She does not know what she is saying. I dare say it’s pure imagination on her part.”

A night watch had been fixed for the Thursday of Passover week. From vague allusions Tichon had gathered that some great mystery was to be enacted that night.

“Will it not be the one Marioushka spoke of?” he

asked himself with horror! He sought her everywhere, but she had disappeared, maybe she had been purposely hid. The torpor of a nightmare held him. He dared not think of what was going to happen, but for Marioushka's sake he would at once have fled.

On Thursday, about midnight, as usual they went to the night-service.

On entering the room, Tichon scanned carefully the faces of those present, and it seemed to him that the same torpor of some awful nightmare held everybody. They seemed to act against their own will.

The Queen was absent.

In came the King. His face, deadly pale, of extraordinary beauty, reminded Tichon of the image of the god Bacchus Dionysus, as he had seen it carved on stones and cameos, in the collection of antiquities belonging to James Bruce.

The night-watch service began. Never yet had the dance whirled so madly. It seemed white birds were flying in terror towards a white abyss.

To avoid rousing suspicion Tichon had also joined the dance, yet he forced himself not to surrender up to its intoxication. He often stopped and sat down on a bench, as if resting. He watched everybody, and thought about Ivanoushka.

The wildest frenzy was now beginning to possess the dancers. They cried with voices no longer their own, "He is descending!"

In spite of all his efforts Tichon felt he was growing weaker and losing control over himself. He convulsively gripped the bench he was sitting upon, in order to resist the impetuous desire to whirl away in this mad dance, growing swifter and swifter at every moment. He suddenly shrieked and felt himself lifted up and carried away by this hurricane.

A last roar of voices:—

"Eva, Evoe!"

Then suddenly all stopped and prostrated themselves on the ground as if struck by lightning, covering their faces with their hands. The white tunics on the floor resembled white wings.

"Here cometh the stainless lamb to offer himself as food

for the faithful!" These words were said by the Queen in a sepulchral, mysterious voice from the subterranean apartment below. To Tichon it seemed to be the voice of the Earth, the Bountiful Mother of All.

The Queen appeared. She held in her hands a large silver cup, a kind of small baptismal font, in which on white swaddling clothes there lay a naked infant. He was sound asleep; some sleeping draught had probably been administered to him. Numerous burning tapers had been fixed on a hoop round the foot of the cup; the flames, coming up to the rim, surrounded the infant with a luminous aureola. He seemed to be lying in a white water lily with a fiery nimbus.

The Queen brought the cup to the King, saying:—

"What is thine is brought to thee for the salvation of all."

The King blessed the child with the sign of the cross.

"In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost!"

Then he took him in his hand and raised a knife over him.

Tichon lay prostrate on the ground, his face hid in his hands. Yet he looked through his fingers and saw everything. It seemed to him the body of the infant was radiant as the sun, that it was not Ivanoushka but the mysterious Lamb, slain from the beginning of the world, and the face of him who held the raised knife was the face of God. He was waiting in great terror, and was wishing with an intense desire for the knife to plunge into the white body and the living blood to be shed. Then everything would be accomplished; in the final terror there would be the final ecstasy.

Suddenly the child began to cry. The King smiled, and the smile transformed the face of the god into the face of the beast.

"The beast, Satan, Antichrist!—" flashed across Tichon's brain, and a sudden intolerable, overwhelming anguish gripped his heart. At the same moment some one seemed to rouse him and the spell was broken. He jumped to his feet, rushed upon Averian Bespaly, caught hold of his hand and averted the stab.

All jumped up and threw themselves on Tichon. They

would have torn him to pieces, had not heavy knocks at that moment sounded at the door. It was being battered from the outside. The double doors gave way with a crash, and fell forwards. In rushed Marioushka and, after her, men in green kaftans, three-cornered hats, with drawn swords; they were soldiers. To Tichon they seemed to be angels of God.

It grew dark before his eyes.

His shoulder felt heavy. He put up his hand and touched something warm and sticky. It was blood. He had been probably wounded in the scuffle.

He closed his eyes and saw the red flames of a burning house, the Red Death. White birds were flying into the red flames. He thought, "More terrible than the Red Death is the White Death," and fell senseless to the ground.

CHAPTER II

THE case of the heretics was investigated by the newly established Holy Synod.

The runaway Cossack, Averian Bespaly, and his sister, Akoulina, were condemned to suffer death on the wheel. The rest, after being flogged and having their nostrils torn, were condemned, the men to forced labour, and the women to weaving-workshops and prison-cloisters.

Tichon, who nearly died of his wound in the prison hospital, was saved by his former protector, James Vilimovitch Bruce. Bruce took him to his house to recover, and interceded with the Bishop of Novgorod, Feofan Prokopovitch, on his behalf. Feofan became interested in Tichon; he wanted to display towards him that pastoral mercy for erring sheep which he was always preaching: "Opponents of the Church ought to be met with kindness and reason, and not as they are nowadays with hard words and alienation." At the same time he hoped that Tichon's abjuration of the heresy and his return to the fold of the Orthodox Church would serve as an example to other heretics and Raskolniks.

Bishop Feofan exempted Tichon from flogging and exile, and took him to Petersburg to do penance in his house.

The bishop's residence was situated on the Aptekarski Island in a dense pine-wood. The library was on the ground floor. Noticing Tichon's love for books, Feofan gave him permission to put his library in order. It was summer and the days were hot. The windows, which looked straight into the wood, were often left open. The peace of the wood mingled with the peace of the library, the rustle of leaves with the rustle of pages. The woodpecker and

cuckoo could be heard. A couple of elks were visible in the clearing of the wood; they had been brought here from the Petrovosky Island, which was wild country at that time. A green twilight filled the room. It was cool and pleasant within. Tichon spent whole days rummaging among the books. He felt as if he had returned to the library of James Bruce, and his four years of wanderings were but a dream.

Bishop Feofan was kind to him. He did not press him to return to the Church. There being no Russian catechism, he chose for Tichon's reading some German theologians; when he was free he would talk with him about what he had read and correct the Protestant teaching according to the Greco-Russian Church. Otherwise Tichon had entire freedom to do what he liked.

Tichon gave himself up to mathematics. In the calm, cold atmosphere of reason he sought repose from those fires of madness; and the nightmares of the Red and the White Death.

He re-read the philosopher Descartes, Leibnitz and Spinoza. And the words of Pastor Glück, would often come back to him: "True philosophy, when read superficially leads away from God; when studied deeply, leads to Him."

To Descartes God was the prime mover of the first matter. The universe was a machine. There was neither love nor mystery nor life, nothing except reason, which is reflected in all worlds, as light is reflected in the transparent crystals of the ice. Tichon was frightened by this lifeless God.

"Nature is full of life," asserted Leibnitz in his Monadology, "I will prove that the origin of every movement is the spirit, and the spirit is a living monad, which is made up of ideas, as the centre is made up of angels." All monads are united into a whole by the pre-established harmony of God. "The universe is God's clock, horologium Dei." "Again instead of life, a machine; instead of God, mechanics," thought Tichon, and once more dread took hold of him.

But the most dreadful, because the most lucid, was Spinoza. He expressed what the others dared not say.

"To assert that God took on Himself the nature of man, is as foolish as to assert that a circle had assumed the nature of a triangle or a square. 'The word became flesh' is an Eastern phrase, which has no meaning whatever in the light of reason. Christianity is distinguished from other religions not by faith nor by love, nor by its gifts of the Holy Spirit, but only by the fact that it is founded on a miracle, that is ignorance, which is the source of all evil, and in this way the faith itself is transformed into superstition." Spinoza revealed the secret thought of all modern philosophers: either with Christ against reason or with reason against Christ.

One day Tichon spoke of Spinoza to Bishop Feofan.

"This philosophy is based on absurdities," declared the bishop with a disdainful smile. "He has woven his reasoning out of contradictions and hid his lack of intelligence in pompous and sonorous words."

This abuse neither convinced nor tranquillized Tichon. The works of the foreign theologians also helped him but little; they dismissed all ancient and modern philosophers as easily as the Russian bishop had done Spinoza.

Sometimes Feofan would let Tichon copy papers concerning the affairs of the Holy Synod. He was struck by the wording of the oath in the Ecclesiastical Regulations: "I swear to recognize as supreme judge of this College the Monarch of all the Russians, our most gracious Sovereign." The Sovereign—the head of the Church, the Sovereign in the place of Christ!

"Magnus ille Leviathan, quae Civitas appellatur, officium artis est et Homo artificialis." Tichon remembered reading those words in "Leviathan," written by the English philosopher Hobbes, who asserted that the Church should be part of the Empire, a member of the great Leviathan, the gigantic automaton. "Is it not the image of the beast created in the image of the god-beast, which is spoken of in Revelation?" Tichon wondered.

The cold reasonableness of this lifeless church of a lifeless God chilled Tichon and became as unbearable to him as the fire of passionate madness, the fire of the Red and White Death.

The day had been fixed when Tichon should be solemnly

anointed with holy baptismal oils in the Troitsa Church, as a mark of his return to the Orthodox Church.

On the eve of that day Bishop Feofan had visitors.

In his Latin letters, Feofan termed such assemblies "noctes atticae." Pickles and fumados were served and washed down with the famous beer brewed by Father Gerasem, that stout economist. They discoursed on philosophy and the "laws of nature" in a free "liberal" tone, that is, they talked atheism.

Tichon listened to the conversation from the glazed gallery which united the dining room with the library.

"Disputes on the subject of faith can never arise between men of great intelligence," Bruce was saying, "for an intelligent man does not question the faith of another. Be he Lutheran, Calvinist or Pagan, it is not the faith but the actions and character alone which count."

"*Ubi boni vini non est quaerenda regio, sic nec boni viri religio et patria,*" replied Feofan.

"Those who condemn philosophy are either ignorant or else over-cunning priests," remarked Basil Nikitch Tatesheff, President of the Mine Department.

Father Marcellus, a learned monk, demonstrated that many of the records of the lives of saints are without foundation in fact.

"There is much deception, much deception"; he repeated the celebrated saying of Theodosius.

"Miracles don't happen nowadays," agreed Doctor Blumentrost.

"I went to see a friend recently," began Tolstoi with a malicious smile, "and there I met two non-commissioned officers. They were arguing together. One affirmed, the other denied the existence of God. The free-thinker cried, 'Don't waste your breath, there is no God.' I joined in the conversation and asked, 'Who told you that God did not exist?' 'Sub-lieutenant Ivanoff told it me so yesterday, at the Gostinni-Dvor.' 'He has chosen a nice place to announce it in, indeed,' said I."

All laughed.

But Tichon, again, grew afraid. He saw the end of all this. He felt certain that these men were on a road which it was impossible not to follow to that end; and

that sooner or later, they, the Russians, would reach the stage which had already been reached in Europe ; and either stand with Christ against reason, or with reason against Christ.

He returned to the library and sat down at the window next to the wall, lined with books in uniform leather parchment bindings. He gazed at the sky, white over the black pines, the empty lifeless abyss of the sky, and remembered the words of Spinoza.

"There is as much in common between God and man as between the constellation of the Dog and the barking animal. Man can love God, but God cannot love man."

And it seemed to him that in that lifeless sky there dwelt a lifeless God, incapable of love. It were better to know that God did not exist. "Perhaps He really does not exist," he thought, and he felt the same terror as in the moment when the baby Ivanoushka cried and Averian, with his raised knife, had smiled.

Tichon fell on his knees and began to pray. Looking up to heaven he repeated one word again and again :—

"Lord, Lord, Lord !"

But the heavens remained silent. Silence was in Tichon's heart. Infinite silence, infinite terror.

Suddenly out of the depths of this silence a voice replied and told him what had to be done.

Tichon straightway rose, went into his cell, pulled his sack out from under the bed, took from it his old monk's habit, the leathern belt, the rosary, the hood, the little icon of St. Sophia, the Wisdom of God, given to him by the girl Sophia ; he took off his kaftan and the rest of the foreign dress he wore, put on the religious habit, fastened round his shoulders the wallet, took the staff, made the sign of the cross and, unnoticed by any one, passed out of the house into the wood.

The next morning, when it was time to go to church for the rite of anointing, Tichon was called. For a long time he was vainly sought ; he had disappeared, leaving no trace behind him. Had he vanished into space ?

CHAPTER III

TRADITION says that the Apostle Andrew, who had come from Kiev to Novgorod, crossed in a boat to the island Varlaam, in the Lake Ladoga, and planted there a stone cross. And long before the conversion of Russia to Christianity, two monks, St. Sergius and St. Herman, came to Russia from the Orient and founded a monastery on the Isle of Varlaam.

And from that day the Christian faith gleamed in the North, like a holy lamp in the arctic midnight gloom.

The Swedes, on taking possession of Lake Ladoga, several times destroyed the monastery. In 1611 they razed it to the ground. For a century the isle remained abandoned. In 1715 Tsar Peter ordered the reconstruction of the monastery. A small wooden church was built over the tombs of St. Sergius and St. Herman in honour of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, a few humble cells were erected around it, to which monks from the Kirilo Beloserski Monastery were transferred. The light of the Christian faith was lit anew. According to prophesy it would remain there until the Second Coming.

Tichon escaped from Petersburg in the company of a monk belonging to the sect of the Runners.

The Runners taught that true believers, in order to escape Antichrist, should flee from town to town, village to village, unto the ends of the earth. The monk invited Tichon to follow him to an unknown kingdom, Oponskoye. This kingdom consisted of seventy islands on the "White Waters," where, in its one hundred and seventy-nine churches of the Assyrian tongue, the Old Faith was supposed to have remained intact. It lay beyond Gog and Magog at the ends of the earth, where the sun rose. "With

God's help we shall reach it walking, in ten years," said the monk.

Tichon had no strict belief in the existence of this Opon-skoye kingdom, but he went with the Runner ; it was a matter of indifference to him where and with whom he went.

The pair reached Ladoga on rafts and went on board a small lake-vessel bound for Serdobal. On the way a storm overtook them. For a long time the vessel was tossed about by the waves and narrowly escaped being wrecked. At last they succeeded in entering the harbour of the Varlaam Monastery. The storm subsided towards morning, but the boat needed repairs.

Tichon went ashore.

The island was of granite, with high cliffs overhanging the water. The soil was so shallow that only small trees could grow there. On the other hand there was moss in abundance ; it spread over the roots of the pines like cobwebs and hung down from the trunks in long green tufts.

The day was hot and misty. The sky, milky white, with the blue just peeping through it, merged with the glassy surface of the lake, so that it was impossible to tell where the water ended and sky began. The heavens appeared to be the lake, the lake the heavens. The quietness was absolute, even the birds were silent. Tichon's soul was filled with infinite calm and peace by this gentle austere arctic paradise. He remembered the song he used to sing in the woods of the Banks of Mosses.

Wonderful Mother Solitude.

A monk of Varlaam had once told him : " Our island is a paradise. You might wander for three days in the woods without meeting any one, either wild beasts or outcasts ! You are alone with God ! "

Tichon wandered for a long time, further and further from the Monastery, till at last he lost his way. Evening came. He was afraid the boat would go without him.

To discover his whereabouts he climbed a hill. The slope was overgrown with pines. On the summit there was

a round clearing, purple with heather. A black rock stood in the middle, shaped like a pillar.

Tichon was fatigued. He found at the end of the clearing between the pines a cavity in the rock covered with soft moss. He laid down in it, as in a cradle, and fell asleep.

When he awoke again it was night. It was almost as light as in daytime, only more peaceful still. The shores of the island were reflected in the mirror of the lake to the last cross of the pine-tree tips, so that it seemed a lower island, only reversed and joined to the upper and suspended between two skies. On the rock in the middle of the glade an old man was kneeling, perhaps some hermit who lived in the forest. His black profile against the golden dawn remained motionless, as if carved from the stone on which he knelt. His face expressed such pious ecstasy as Tichon had never yet seen in a human countenance. The silence around seemed as if due to this prayer, while the sweetness of the heather rose like the smoke of incense.

Daring neither to breathe nor to move he gazed for a long time at the old man, prayed with him and in the infinite sweetness of that prayer again became drowsy and fell asleep again.

He awoke with the rising sun.

There was no one on the rock. Tichon approached it and noticed in the thick heather a narrow path. He followed it. It led into a valley surrounded by rocks. Further down was a birch grove, in the middle of it a glade overgrown with tall grass. He heard the ripple of a hidden stream.

A hermit stood in the glade. It was he whom Tichon had seen in the night. He was feeding an elk doe and her young one.

Tichon could scarcely believe his eyes. He knew how timid the elks were, especially the female with their young. Had he suddenly surprised and lit upon some eternal mystery of those ancient days when man and beast dwelt together in Paradise?

Having eaten the bread the elk began to lick the old man's hand. He blessed her with sign of the cross, kissed her shaggy head and said :—

"May the Lord protect thee, mother!"

All at once she looked round backwards in alarm, jumped to one side and rushed with her young one into the wood. Nothing could be heard but the crackling of branches. She had probably scented Tichon.

He approached the old man.

"Give me your blessing, Father!"

The hermit blessed him gently as he had blessed the elk.

"The Lord protect you, child! What is your name?"

"Tichon."

"Tichon! Tichon is a word of peace. Whence come you? This place is but a desert and little known. It's seldom we see pilgrims."

"We were going to Serdobal from Ladoga," answered Tichon, "when our vessel was driven by the storm to this island. I went into the wood yesterday and lost my way."

"Did you spend the night in the wood?"

"Yes, in the wood."

"Have you had any food? You must be hungry?"

The piece of bread Tichon had had with him he had eaten the night before. He was hungry now.

"Come to the cell, Tichon, I will share with you what God has sent me."

Father Sergius (this was the hermit's name) to judge by the greyness of his black hair was probably about fifty. Yet his walk and all his movements were as brisk and nimble as those of a young man. His face, dry and austere, was nevertheless young. His brown, short-sighted eyes were always screwed up, as though smiling with an irrepressible smile, almost frolicsome, slightly cunning: it looked as if he knew of something amusing which others did not know, and was just going to tell it and make every one laugh. But at the same time in the gaiety there was that air of assured peace Tichon had noticed during the prayer.

They came to an abrupt rocky cliff. Beds planted with vegetables were visible through a dilapidated wattle fence. On three sides the walls of the cliff here formed a natural habitation. The fourth, or front, was of wood. Logs had been placed across the entrance and provided with a window and door. Over the latter an icon of the holy patrons of Varlaam, St. Sergius and St. Herman. The

roof between the cliff walls was of turf, covered with bark and overgrown with moss, surmounted by an octagonal cross. The valley ended in a sandbank which had been deposited on the shore of the lake by the stream flowing into it at this place. Nets stretched on sticks were drying in the sun. Another old monk, clothed in a patched cassock made of coarse stuff, his naked legs up to the knees in water, was mending and tarring an overturned boat. He was a robust, square-shouldered man with a weather-beaten face and white scanty hair. "A real Apostle Peter," thought Tichon. The air was filled with a smell of pine chips, fish and tar.

"Hilarionoushka," Father Sergius called out, The old man turned round, left off his work, approached them and silently prostrated himself before Tichon.

"Don't be alarmed, child," said Father Sergius with a smile, noticing Tichon's confusion. "He salutes everybody in this manner, even little children. He is so humble!" Continuing "Will you prepare our supper, Hilarionoushka? We must give this pilgrim of God some food."

Father Hilarion rose and closely examined Tichon. His "humble" gaze did not lack severity. His look expressed that saying of St. Arsenius, the hermit of Thebaid, "Love all men, and flee from the face of any man."

The cell was divided into two. The front portion, quite small, resembled the interior of a peasant's hut; the other at the back had its walls covered with icons, which were cheerful, like Father Sergius himself. There was an icon of the Holy Virgin of the Merciful, one of the Odoriferous Flower, one of the Blessed Womb, one of the Bestower of Life, one of the Unhoped-for Joy. Before this last one, specially beloved by Father Sergius, a lamp was burning. In this part of the cave, dark and narrow as the grave, lay two coffins with stone pillows therein. In these the old men used to sleep.

They sat down to the meal. A board laid on a moss-covered pine trunk served as a table, Father Hilarion brought bread and salt, wooden bowls with sour cabbage, salted cucumbers, mushroom soup, and a dish prepared of sweet-smelling herbs.

Father Sergius and Tichon ate in silence while Father Hilarion recited a Psalm :—

“The eyes of all wait upon thee, O Lord, and thou givest them their meat in due season.”

After the meal Father Hilarion returned to his boat. Father Sergius and Tichon sat down on the stone steps which led to the cell. Before them lay the lake—another sky,—pale blue, smooth and tranquil, reflecting large round white clouds.

“Have you made a vow of pilgrimage, my child?” enquired Father Sergius.

Tichon looked at him and longed to tell him the whole truth.

“I have made a great vow, Father. I am seeking through this world for the *true Church*.”

And he recounted his whole life, beginning with his flight from Antichrist and ending with a last abjuration of the lifeless Orthodox Church of the day.

When he had ended Father Sergius remained for a long time silent, shading his face with both hands. Then he rose and laid his hand on Tichon’s head and said :—

“Thus spoke the Lord Himself : ‘and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.’ Go then to the Lord Himself, my son, in peace. Fear nothing, you will then be in the Church again, in the true Church ! in the true Church !”

Such power breathed through these words that he seemed to be prophesying.

“I implore you, Father,” exclaimed Tichon, falling at his feet, “let me be your disciple ! Let me remain here with you in the forest.”

“Remain here, my child, and the Lord bless you.” Father Sergius embraced and kissed him. “You will not disturb our peace,” he added with his habitual cheerful smile.

So Tichon remained in the desert with the two old men.

Father Hilarion fasted very strictly. Sometimes for weeks he would not taste bread. He kept himself alive with pine bark, which he dried, crushed in a mortar and baked with a little flour. He drank from land-locked pools water which was tepid and tasted of rust. In the winter he prayed standing up to his knees in snow. In the

summer he would remain naked in the marshes offering his body for food to the midges. He never washed, following the precept of the Holy Isaac Sirine : On no account uncover your members. If you feel a desire to scratch cover your hand with your shirt or trousers, and then only scratch. Never touch your bare body or privy members with your hand. If your body suffers, let it do so."

Father Hilarion sometimes spoke to Tichon about his teacher Trifon, a monk at the Kirillo Beloserski Monastery. This Trifon had been surnamed the Sordid, because of his saintly sordidness, through which, it was said, he had the special gift of prophecy. Water had never wetted his feet nor his head ; and yet he had no vermin on him, which caused him distress, "For," said he, "in the future life I shall be overrun by fleas big as mice." He repeated day and night the Lord's prayer ; his lips were so used to saying it that they moved now perpetually, by instinct. On his forehead, by dint of resting his fingers thereon in endlessly making signs of the cross, there was a sore. When officiating he often wept so abundantly that he used to swoon. During the eight days which preceded his death he suffered a great deal, but never complained, never moaned nor begged for a drink. When he was asked, "Father, have you much pain?" he answered, "All is well!" One day Father Hilarion had gently crept up to him and heard him murmur : "Oh for a good mouthful of water!" "Are you thirsty?" asked Hilarion. But Trifon answered aloud "No. I do not want to drink." And by this Hilarion understood that Father Trifon was tormented by a great thirst, but that he had imposed this upon himself as a supreme privation.

"Notwithstanding all these fasts and works and prayers," said Father Hilarion, "it is almost impossible for a man to be saved. According to a certain saint, out of thirty thousand souls which left the body only two got into Heaven ; the rest went to Hell. The devil is very powerful," Father Hilarion would sometimes sigh in great affliction : he seemed doubtful as to which was the stronger, which would conquer, God or the Devil.

At times it seemed to Tichon that should Father Hilarion

press his thought he would arrive at the same conclusion as the teachers of the Red Death.

Father Sergius differed exceedingly from Father Hilarion. "An extravagant and unreasonable abstinence," said he, "does more harm than eating sufficient food. Every one ought to decide for himself the amount of food he should eat. It is right to taste all foods, even those which are pleasant, for to the pure all things are pure. Every creature and gift of God is good and none should be despised."

Salvation, he said, depended not on the accomplishment of extraordinary actions, but on the inward life. Every night he prayed, standing motionless on the rock, and Tichon felt that in that motionlessness there was yet a more powerful impulse than in all the furious dance of the "Khlisti."

"How should one pray?" Tichon one day asked Father Sergius.

"In thought," the latter answered, "descend into your own heart and say 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me!' You can pray while standing, sitting or lying down. Confine your reason in your own heart; and keep back, as much as possible, your breathing. At first you will discover within yourself deep darkness and great hardness; you will feel an obstacle, a kind of triple rampart of brass between God and yourself; but do not get discouraged. Pray all the more perseveringly. At last the brazen barrier will fall, and an ineffable light will fall, too, upon your heart. Words will cease, and your prayer will change into sighs, genuflections, yearnings of the heart and gentle sorrowings. This is the perfect peace. This is the great ecstasy. Man no longer knows whether he is within his body or without it. This is the awe and the vision of God. *Therein Man and God are fused, and become one*; and the prophet's words, 'God unites himself to a god, and will be known by a god,' is accomplished. That is what mental prayer is, my child."

Tichon noticed that in speaking to him Father Sergius had the same exalted, almost intoxicated, look the Khlisti had, only their drunkenness was momentary and frantic; his, lasting and peaceable.

Father Hilarion and Father Sergius were so different in

character that it might have been imagined they could never get on together. Yet they lived in perfect harmony.

"Father Sergius is a chosen vessel," Hilarion used to say; "God has chosen him for honour and me for dishonour. He is made of white ivory and I of black. To him everything will be forgiven. From me everything will be demanded. He soars like an angel, while I creep like an ant. His salvation is certain, while mine is scarcely probable. But when I feel myself perishing I will seize the hem of the skirt of Father Sergius, and he will lift me up with him, perhaps."

"Father Hilarion is a solid rock, a pillar of orthodoxy, an impregnable wall," Father Sergius used to say. "I am but a leaf driven by the wind. But for him I should have fallen long since, and wandered away from all the ancient traditions. He is my bulwark. I am as safe with him as in the bosom of Christ."

Father Sergius did not repeat to Father Hilarion his conversation with Tichon, but Hilarion guessed everything. He scented a heretic, as the wolf scents the lamb. One day Tichon by chance overheard a conversation between the two hermits.

"Be patient, Hilarionoushka," besought Sergius. "Be patient with him for Christ's sake! Live in peace and charity with him."

"In peace with a heretic!" retorted Hilarion, "a heretic must be fought with unto death. His pernicious spirit must be avoided. Love your own enemies, not God's. Shun a heretic, never talk to him about the true faith, only spit on him. Truly he is worse than dogs or swine. Let him be accursed, anathema!"

"Be patient, Hilarionoushka," repeated Father Sergius, but his voice half wavered.

Tichon went away apart. He suddenly realized that it was vain for him to expect help from Father Sergius: this great saint, strong as an angel before the Lord, was as weak as a child before men.

A few days later Tichon was again sitting with Father Sergius on the stone steps which led to the cell. They were alone. Father Hilarion had gone off fishing.

It was a hot white night, darkened by clouds. A storm

had been beating up for some days. On the earth there was absolute quiet, while on the sky heavy silent clouds were sweeping across, like dumb giants hurrying to a battle. From time to time a gentle, distant subterranean rumbling as of thunder was heard, like the grunting of a great sleeping animal. Pale violet lightning flashed in the sky, as though the night was trembling with apprehension. And at each repeated flash the lake reflected clearly in every detail the island, even to the last cross on the pine-tree tops; all the double island suspended between two skies. And after each flash all relapsed into peace and gloom, only disturbed by the low muttering of the thunder.

Tichon remained silent, while Father Sergius gazing at the darkness sang a litany to Jesus. And the gentle words of the prayer mingled with the gentle rumbling of the thunder.

Jesus, invisible force,
Jesus, infinite mercy,
Jesus, luminous beauty,
Jesus, unspeakable love,
Jesus, Son of the living God,
Jesus, have mercy on me, a sinner!

Tichon felt that Father Sergius wanted to say something to him, but could not make up his mind to do it. Darkness had hidden the monk's face from him, but the swift flashes occasionally revealed on it an unwonted sadness.

"Father!" said Tichon, at last breaking the silence, "I shall soon leave you."

"Where are you going, my son?"

"I do not know, Father, and it does not really matter. I will go straight before me——"

Father Sergius took him by the hand and Tichon heard a trembling tender whisper:—

"Return, return, my son!"

"Where to?" asked Tichon, and he felt afraid, not knowing why.

"To the Church, to the Church of God," whispered Father Sergius, more and more tenderly and in a more and more trembling voice.

"Into what Church, Father?"

"Oh temptation, temptation!——" sighed Father

Sergius, then continued with an effort, "into the one holy apostolic Church—" but his words sounded sad and forced; as if he had not spoken them of his own free will.

"And where is this Church to be found?" groaned Tichon in great anguish.

"Ah, my poor, poor son, how is it possible to live without a church?" Father Sergius murmured, and his voice expressed sympathy and great anguish. Tichon felt that the hermit had understood him.

In the flashes of the lightning he saw the face of the old man with its trembling lips and helpless smile, its wide open eyes filled with tears, and Tichon understood what it was that filled him with such fear: the fact that this face could be so pitiable.

Tichon knelt and stretched his hands out to Father Sergius with a forlorn hope.

"Save me, help me, protect me!— Don't you see for yourself the Church is actually perishing, the faith is perishing, the whole of Christianity is perishing? Already the mystery of lawlessness is being enacted, the abomination of desolation is in the holy places. Antichrist is being born!— Arise, Father, for a great work! Return to the world, yourself to fight against Antichrist!"

"What are you saying, child? How can I, sinner that I am?" muttered Father Sergius, with terrified humility.

Tichon understood that all supplications would be vain, that Father Sergius had for ever cut himself off from the world, and was dead to it. Tichon remembered the terrible words, "Love all men and flee from the face of any of them." "And what if it be truly so," he thought, in great despair, "what if one of the two had to be chosen? Either God without the world, or the world without God?"

He fell with his face to the ground and remained there for a long time motionless, unconscious of the hermit's caressing and comforting hand.

When he came to himself he was alone. Father Sergius had probably gone into the mountain to pray.

Tichon rose, entered the cell, slipped on his travelling habit, put round his shoulders his wallet, on his neck the icon of St. Sophia, the Wisdom of God, took up his staff, made the sign of the cross and went into the wood to con-

tinue his endless wanderings. He wanted to go away without taking leave of the hermit, for he knew farewells would be too painful for them both.

Yet in order to have a last look at Father Sergius, if only from the distance, he went into the mountain.

There in the middle of the glade stood as usual the old man praying on his rock.

Tichon sought the cavity in the rock, the cradle lined with soft moss where he had spent the first night, lay down in it and for a long time continued to look at the motionless outline of the praying monk, the blinding, dazzling white flashes of lightning and the silent clouds which swept across the sky.

At last he fell into that slumber into which the disciples of our Lord had fallen when the Master was praying in Gethsemane and coming towards them found them asleep, being heavy with sorrow. When he awoke the sun had already risen and Father Sergius had left the stone. Tichon approached it and kissed the place where the old man had stood. Then he left the mountain and took his way along narrow paths through the woods towards the Varlaam Monastery.

After the heavy sleep he felt weak and broken, as after a swoon. He seemed to be sleeping still, wanting and yet unable to awake. He was filled with that deep anguish which used to forbode his fits. He felt dizzy. His thought grew confused. Snatches of distant memories flashed across his mind. Now it was Pastor Glück repeating Newton's words about the end of the world: "a comet will fall into the sun and this will cause a heat so intense that the whole world will be consumed by fire. Hypotheses non fingo!" Now it was the melancholy song of the "Coffin-liners"—

Ye hollowed oak-trunks, ye will prove
Fit house for us.

Now it was the last cry of the victims in the blazing chapel, "The bridegroom cometh at midnight." Now the mad whirl of the dancers and the piercing shriek:—

"Eva, Evoe! Eva, Evoe!"

Now it was the gentle cry of Ivanouskha, the stainless lamb, crying under the knife of Averian—The quiet

words of Spinoza about the intellectual love of God, *Amor Dei intellectualis*, "Man can love God but God cannot love man—The oath in the ecclesiastical regulations which ordained obedience to the Autocrat of Russia as to Christ Himself—The austere humility of Father Hilarion: "Love all men and flee from any man,"—The affectionate whisper of Father Sergius, "Return to the Church, the true Church, my child."

He recovered for a moment, looking round him and saw that he had lost his way.

For a long time he searched for the path among the heather. At last he gave it up and went on at random. The storm had passed over. The clouds had dispersed; the sun was very hot. Tichon was thirsty, yet not a drop of water could he find in this stony desert. Nothing but grey mosses, lichen, stunted pines overgrown with moss as with the cobweb; their thin trunks, often broken, stretched out like the thin arms and legs of sick people, covered with a reddish inflamed and peeling skin. Between them the air trembled with heat and over all was spread an implacable sky like copper heated to white heat. The stillness was intense. Inexpressible was the terror of this dazzling, sparkling, mid-day stillness.

Tichon again looked round and recognized the place he had often frequented and had only passed this morning. At the very end of the long glade of the forest, a road made probably once by the Swedes, but long since abandoned and overgrown by heather, glittered the lake. This was a spot not far from the cell of Father Sergius. He had probably on his wanderings made a circle and returned to the place whence he had started. He was tired as if he had walked a thousand miles, as if he had been ever walking. He asked himself whither he was going, and why? To the unknown kingdom of Oponskoye or the invisible legendary city of Kitesh, places in whose existence he no longer believed.

He sank in exhaustion on the roots of a dry old pine, which rose solitary above the undergrowth. It was all the same, there was nowhere else he could go. Could he but lie thus with closed eyes, motionless, on, on until his death!

He remembered what he had been told by a teacher of a new religion. Those teachers were called "Deniers," because they answered every affirmation of the Church with a negative. "There is no church, no clergy, no grace, no mystery. Everything has been taken up into heaven." "There is nothing, there was nothing, there will be nothing," thought Tichon. "Neither God nor the universe exist. Everything had perished, everything had come to an end. And even whether there is an end is doubtful. Nothing is sure but the eternity of nothingness."

He remained for a long time unconscious. Suddenly he recovered, opened his eyes and saw on the west a huge black cloud spotted, as it were, with purulent white spots. Slowly like a gigantic scorpion, with fat protruding belly and hairy legs, it was creeping up almost stealthily towards the sun. It stretched out a leg, and the sun trembled and went out. Rapid grey shadows flitted across the ground and the air became dim and sticky, as with cobwebs. Warm currents of air passed as though exhaled from the mouth of an animal. Tichon was suffocating. His head throbbed, it grew dim before his eyes. Cold sweat, produced by excessive fatigue, bathed his body. He wanted to rise and creep to the cell of Father Sergius, and die in his presence, but strength failed him. He tried to cry out and could not.

Suddenly, far in the distance, quite at the end of the clearing, in the dark cloud something white appeared, and trembled like a white dove bathed in sunshine. As it drew nearer Tichon looked attentively and saw that it was a small, old man, quite white, who was coming towards him with quick movements as though floating in the air.

He came quite near and sat down next to him on the root of the pine. Tichon felt he had seen him before, only he could not remember where and when. The old man had quite an ordinary appearance. He seemed to be one of those pilgrims who wander icon in hand from village to village, town to town, collecting money for the building of a new church.

"Rejoice Tichon, rejoice!" he said with a tender smile; his voice was as gentle as the hum of bees, or the distant sound of a bell.

"Who are you?" asked Tichon.

"I am Ivanoushka. Don't you recognize me? The Lord has sent me to you. He will soon follow me."

The old man laid his hand on the head of Tichon, who felt appeased, as a child by the caress of its mother.

"You are weary. Poor child! I have many children like you. You wander about the world poor and abandoned. You suffer cold and famine, sorrow, privation and cruel persecutions. Yet fear not, beloved. Wait a little, I will soon unite you all in the new Church, the Church of Christ who is to Come. There was the ancient Church of Peter the indestructible rock. There will be the new Church of John, the Winged Thunder. The Thunder will strike the rock and out will gush the living waters. The first Testament was the Old, the kingdom of the Father; the second Testament, the New, or the Kingdom of the Son; the third Testament, or the last, the Kingdom of the Spirit, one in three and three in one. And the three make but one. Faithful is the Lord who promises, who is and was and is to be!"

The old man's countenance suddenly became quite young. It was the face of an immortal. Tichon recognized John, the Son of Thunder.

The old man raised his arm towards the black sky and cried with a loud voice:—

"The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly, Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus," repeated Tichon; he too raised his hand to the sky with great joy akin to great fear.

A lightning flashed white across the black sky; it seemed the heavens were literally rent in twain.

And Tichon saw the image of a Son of man, his head and his hair were white like wool, as white as the snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And seven thunders uttered their voices:—

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come!"

And when the thunders stopped a great silence ensued, and through the stillness sounded a voice more quiet than the stillness :—

“ I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. I am alive and was dead and shall live from eternity to eternity. Amen.”

“ Amen,” repeated John, the Son of Thunder.

“ Amen,” repeated Tichon, the first Son of the new Church of the Spirit. He fell upon his face as one dead. He was struck dumb for ever.

* * * * *

He recovered in the cell of Father Sergius. The hermit had been troubled about Tichon the whole day. He had a vague presentiment that some evil would befall him. Again and again he came out of his cell, calling, “ Tichon, Tichon,” but no one replied, the echo alone broke the hush which precedes thunderstorms.

When the cloud spread over the sky it grew dark as night in the cell. A lighted lamp shone dimly at the far end where both monks were praying.

Father Hilarion was chanting the psalm :—

“ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters : the God of glory thundereth : the Lord is upon many waters.

“ The voice of the Lord is powerful ; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.”

Suddenly a dazzling white light filled the cell, followed by such a deafening peal of thunder that it almost seemed as if the rock, forming the cell, had been shattered.

The two old men ran out and saw the dry pine, which rose by itself above the underwood on the border of the clearing, was burning like a candle, against the black sky. The lightning had struck it.

Father Sergius began to run, crying in a loud voice, “ Tichon ! Tichon ! ” Father Hilarion followed him. They found Tichon lying unconscious at the very foot of the burning tree. They lifted him up, and carried him into the cell, where they laid him, there being no other bed, in one of the coffins. At first they thought he had been killed by the lightning. Father Hilarion was getting ready to say the prayers for the dying, but Father Sergius stopped

him and began to read the Gospels. When he came to the passage, "*Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live,*" Tichon opened his eyes. Father Hilarion almost fell to the ground. He thought Father Sergius had raised the dead.

Tichon soon recovered. He got up and sat down on a bench. He recognized Father Sergius and Father Hilarion, understood all they said to him, but unable to speak himself answered by signs. At last they saw that he was dumb. They surmised that the sudden shock had robbed him of his speech. His face was radiant. There was something awe-inspiring in this radiance, as though he had really risen from the dead. 

They sat down to a meal. Tichon ate and drank. After the meal they prayed. For the first time Father Hilarion prayed with Tichon. He seemed to have forgotten he was a heretic and felt towards him a reverence mingled with awe.

Then they went to bed. The old men as usual in their coffins, Tichon in the front room on the stove.

The storm was raging; the wind howled; rain was pouring down. Waves were beating up on the lake; the thunder rolled and the window was illumined by an almost uninterrupted white light, which mingled with the red light of the lamp, burning in the depths of the cave before the image of the "Unhoped-for Joy." Yet to Tichon that was no lightning but the white radiant light of the old man who was bending over him, talking to him about the Church of the Sons of Storm, caressing and loving him. He fell asleep to the noise of the storm, as a child to the lullaby of its mother.

He woke early, long before the dawn. Hurriedly dressing himself he took up his staff, went up to Father Sergius, who was yet asleep in his coffin, like Father Hilarion, knelt and kissed his forehead very gently, so as not to wake him. Father Sergius opened his eyes for a moment, raised his head, and murmured "Tichon!" Yet the next instant he let it fall back on the stone, which served him as pillow, and fell into a still deeper sleep.

Tichon went forth out of the cell. The storm had

abated. Again great silence reigned upon earth. Only from the wet branches of the trees drops were falling. The air was filled with the resinous scent of pines. Above their black tips the pallid semicircle of the moon appeared upon a sky flushed with the breaking dawn.

Tichon went on his way light of heart, vigorous and brisk, as if borne along by an over-great joy. And he knew he would walk thus, eternally dumb, till he had traversed all the ways of the world and entered the Church of John. Then would he cry aloud, "Hosanna to the coming Christ!"

In order not to get lost he walked along the high ridges of the hills whence he could see the shore of the lake. In the distance on the horizon lay a storm-cloud, still livid, black and terrible, hiding the rising sun. Suddenly the first rays pierced it like sharp spears and forth gushed shafts of fire, streams of blood. It might have been fancied that in the prophetic heavens the last battle, which would end the world, was being fought already, "*Michael and his angels waged war against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,*

"And prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven.

"And the great dragon, that old serpent, called the Devil, was cast out of the heavens." The sun was emerging from behind a cloud, radiant in its force and glory like unto the face of the Coming Lord, and Heaven and earth and all creation joined in the hymn to the rising sun.

"Hosanna! Light will overcome Darkness."

Tichon ran down from the mountain as if flying to meet the sun. His eternal dumbness was itself hymn to the Lord that was to come!

Hosanna! Christ will overcome the Antichrist!

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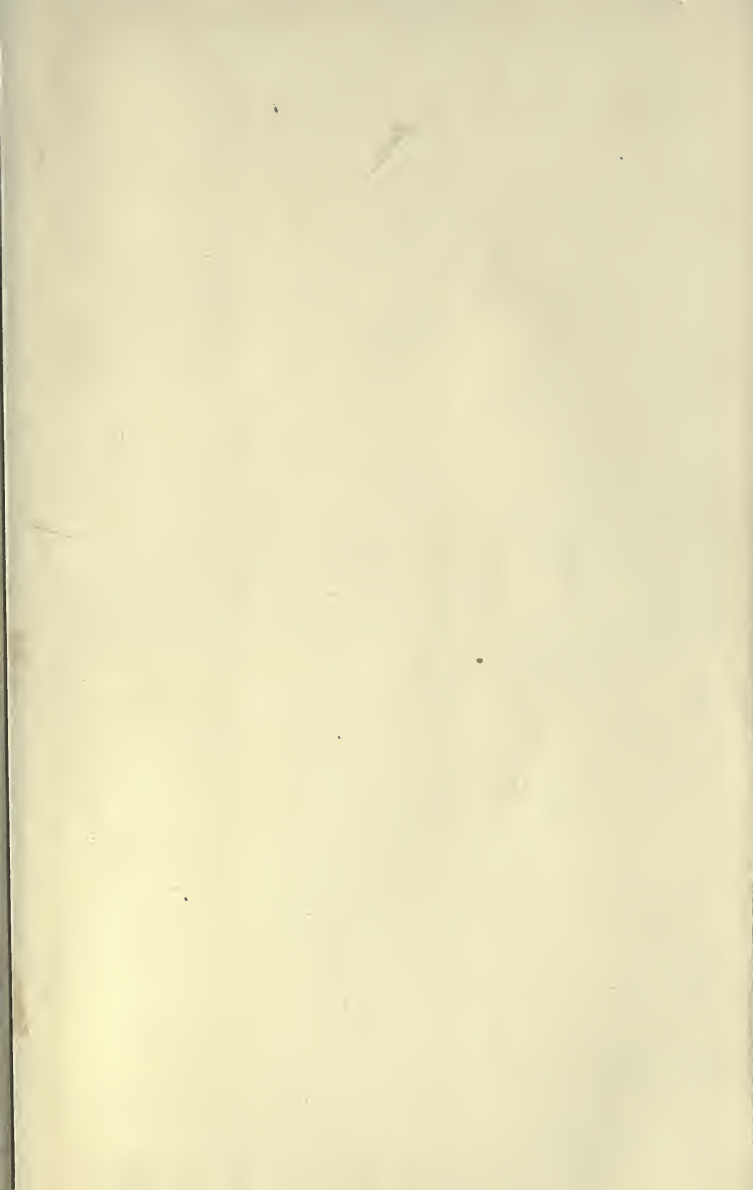
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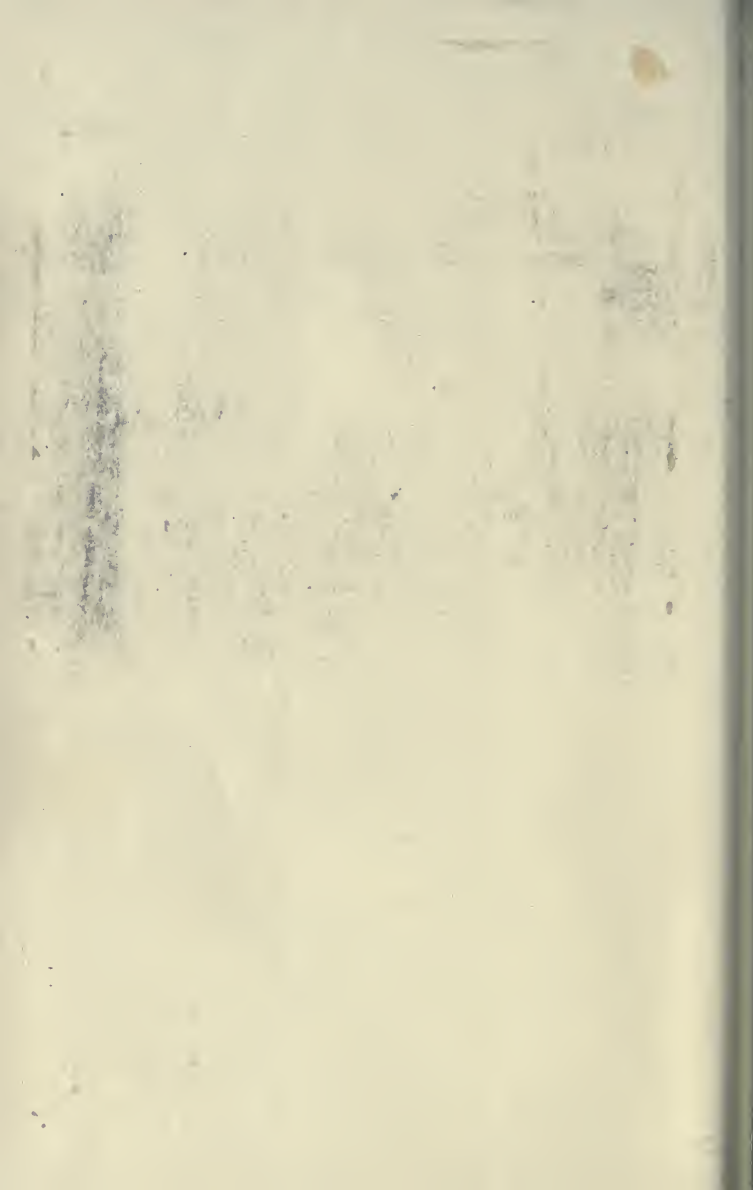
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